

Why Should I Believe The Bible?

The 2005
POWER



Lectures

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Dedication

The phone rang at the church building, and it was not good news. In fact, the news sent us rushing to the hospital, and into the throne room of God to pour out our prayers. It was an accident, a car accident, involving one of our members, her children, and her mother-in-law. A drunk driver hit them from behind, and then fled the scene.

He left behind a car full of victims. In truth, he left behind a host of victims who were not anywhere near that car that day. As for those in the car, there was pain. All of the occupants experienced some degree of physical pain, but one was injured critically. Little Ethan Bayless, only 2 1/2 years old, was rushed to the hospital with severe injuries. Friends and family swarmed to the hospital as the news spread. Tests were conducted, and the family waited, clinging to each other, and to the hope that young Ethan would survive.

Ethan fought hard, but left the sorrows of this world behind on December 2nd, 2004. It didn't seem possible! Please, let this be a very bad dream, and then let us all wake up to find Ethan doing what he loved to do! What did Ethan love to do? His parents, Jason and Ginger Bayless, wrote:

"Ethan was a child that loved to explore places and things. Whether it was the dryer or the fridge, he was always exploring something. He was a sweet and sensitive child with a streak of mischief. We were always laughing at something he had done or said. Ethan always felt bad for people who were sick or hurt. He thought it was his job to make them feel better. We had pictures of some St. Jude children on our refrigerator and every night he would pray "please help the kids on the refrigerator get better." Ethan was also a loyal and devoted Cubs fan. He and his Daddy would sit and watch a game and drink root beer together.

Ethan loved any kind of music. He was always singing Bible class songs. Every night before he went to bed he wanted to sing "B-I-B-L-E," "Jesus Loves Me," and "This Little Light Of Mine." One Sunday morning, Ethan (about 1 1/2 at this time) began singing very loudly during the closing prayer. He was not saying any words - only da-da-da-da-da-but he had a rhythm going. As soon as services were over, several came up to us and asked if he was singing "The Three Wandering Jews." Indeed

he was! They all kept saying that he had the tune and timing down pat. That boy absolutely loved to sing! We know that he is singing his little heart out in heaven.”

It is indeed tragic that someone with so much life ahead of him was taken from family and friends by a multiple offender of DUI laws. At the back of this book, you may read the powerful speech given before the Mississippi Judiciary Committee, by one of Ethan’s grandfathers, appealing to them to strengthen the DUI laws in the state of Mississippi. Our prayers and our hearts go out to all of Ethan’s surviving family as we dedicate the 2005 POWER Lectureship book to the memory of Ethan Bayless. In the meantime we are comforted by the teaching of the book that Ethan loved to sing about: the B-I-B-L-E, and by the following words, which appear on Ethan’s headstone:

*Rest, Big Boy, in happiness rest,
Mingling with angels, we know you are blest.
Far from the trials that tempt us to stray,
God in His mercy has called you away.*



Ethan Eric Bayless

Acknowledgments

This lectureship volume is the largest we have ever produced, and it did not happen by accident. A mountain of work went into the production of this book. It all started with the elders approving the theme for this year's study. These men (Larry Everson and Con Lambert) love the Bible and were more than delighted to approve the study of why men should believe in it as the inspired Word of God. The Southaven congregation is extremely blessed to have these men as our shepherds. Geraldine Chaney, who has been my secretary since my arrival in 1991, helped me get out all the assignments and paperwork necessary to get the ball rolling.

Of course, the brethren assigned to write chapters for this volume deserve the lion's share of credit for its production. Needless to say, this book could not exist were it not for the willingness of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ to take the time to research and to write. It only took me a few seconds to type the preceding sentence of gratitude, but the authors who contributed chapters to this lectureship book spent countless hours doing their work. Words cannot express the depth of my appreciation.

Last, but most definitely not least, gratitude is due to my lovely wife, Tish, and to my friend and brother in Christ, Robin Smith. Their help in producing this year's book is absolutely incalculable. They both assisted me for countless hours in the typesetting and formatting of the book. Their pleasant personalities actually made the tedious work enjoyable! Also, I would like to thank my older children, Daniel and Holly, who deserve thanks for assisting in the "Scripture-checking" of each manuscript. In helping out, they learned a lot of good Bible verses!

--B. J. Clarke

Foreword

Perhaps there is no greater need within the world, the religious world, or even our own brotherhood, than to re-establish the claim of the Bible's inspiration. This is true because so often when folks engage in religious discussion today, appeal is made to book, chapter and verse to settle the controversy, and often, the resultant attitude toward the book, chapter and verse cited is: "So what if the Bible says that. It is an ancient book which has no right to tell me what to do."

People who make such statements are ignorant of the fact that the Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In view of the modern attitude toward the Bible, we must once again dedicate ourselves to demonstrating that the Bible is **beyond mere human production**. Although men were employed in the writing of Holy Scripture, these men "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Fortunately, God has not left us without witness concerning the proof and demonstration of the inspiration of the Bible. Numerous strands of evidence, both internal and external, are abundantly available to the student who wishes to ascertain the nature of the Book of books, the Bible.

This book is presented for the purpose of providing absolute proof that the Bible is the Word of God. The first section of the book deals with evidences for its inspiration. The second section shows why the Bible should be believed above other books which also claim to be Divine. The final section of the book answers some basic questions and addresses the consequences of failing to believe in the Bible. Since the Bible will judge us in the last day (John 12:48), it is imperative that we know the Book!

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CHAPTER 1

Because It Is The Inspired Word of God

Dub McClish

Introduction

ONE CAN HARDLY IMAGINE any subject in religion but that men have capitulated the Biblical teaching on it.¹ The mere mention of the inspiration of the Bible, the authority of Scripture, baptism, the church, grace, repentance, worship, the Lord's supper, the virgin birth, the Deity of Christ, the Lord's resurrection, the Lord's Second Coming, Heaven, Hell, and many other subjects is sufficient to remind us that men have utterly abandoned the Scriptures concerning them.

However, the consequences of abandoning some doctrines are greater than those of abandoning others. For example, one may devoutly believe in all of the above-listed doctrines of Scripture except that New Testament worship excludes the use of mechanical instruments. While this unauthorized worship is by no means a minor issue and is a sin that will cause one to be lost [worshiping with an instrument constitutes "strange music" as surely as the unauthorized fire of Nadab and Abihu constituted "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1-2)], if one is genuine in his belief in the authority of the Bible, he may be taught out of this error.

No subject is more significant and far-reaching than the subject of the inspiration of the Bible. Rejection of the Bible's **inspiration** equals rejection of the Bible itself

because it claims to be peculiarly and uniquely revealed, inspired, and delivered to men by God. It further follows that rejection of the Bible is tantamount to rejection of God and His Son, even as it is also a rejection of the one true religion. If one surrenders the conviction that the Bible is inspired—as the Bible defines and describes “inspiration”—then he divorces himself from any accountability to its authority and its doctrine. Can one envision the folly of trying to convince an infidel that the use of instrumental music in New Testament worship (or any other erroneous doctrine or practice) is unauthorized by appealing to the Bible, when the infidel denies the very existence of its Author? One who denies the taproot of Divine inspiration as the Bible’s source can only conceive of it as a dead, fruitless tree—a historical curiosity piece, at best.

Not all who deny the inspiration of Scripture are avowed Atheists or Humanists. Skeptical, unbelieving theologians by the thousands do not accept the Bible’s claim of inspiration, and they have invented various theories in support of their denial. There is a real antagonism between what the Bible says about its origin and what faithless theologians say on the subject.² This antipathy is not merely imagined or a matter of “semantics.” The threat of these theological theorists can be answered and must be challenged. They long ago captured most Protestant seminaries and schools and have for several decades been spewing out their faithless vomit upon unsuspecting auditors in their pews, destroying whatever measure of belief in the Word of God that once resided in the sectarian masses. The same skepticism has also begun to infiltrate the body of Christ.

Those faithless theologians who substitute their naturalistic theories of “inspiration” for true inspiration remind us somewhat of another stripe of faithless

theologian—the “theistic” evolutionist. He does not want to be labeled an “Atheist,” but he respects the unprovable theories of infidel scientists on origins more than he does the Biblical account. He thus tries to merge the two by saying that God produced everything by means of evolution over millions of years. The result is the denial of both evolution and belief in God (and the Bible) in their full implications.

Likewise, certain theologians (most of whom are likely also theistic evolutionists, incidentally) do not want to be accused of not believing in inspiration, but neither can they stand to be ostracized by their skeptic peers who subscribe to the most vicious forms of Biblical criticism. Thus, they compromise by saying that they believe in “inspiration,” but, by the time they get through defining it, it bears no resemblance to what the Bible teaches on the subject.

We have organized this study of Biblical inspiration as follows:

- Inspiration—the Scriptural claims
- Inspiration—the skeptical contradictions
- Inspiration—the skeptical history
- Inspiration—the skeptics in the church
- Inspiration—the Scriptural evidence

Inspiration—The Scriptural Claims

The Bible’s claims about itself involve three important words: **inspiration**, **plenary**, and **verbal**. One does not read much of the Bible before he comes to understand that it claims for itself the very concepts of origin and quality embodied in these three words.

The Inspiration Claims

Ironically, while the **concept** appears consistently throughout the Bible, the **word** “inspiration” is found only

twice in the KJV Bible. Job 32:8 reads, “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”³ Most are more familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” In Job 32:8 “inspiration” is the rendering of the Hebrew word *neshamah*, meaning “to breathe,” and, accordingly, the ASV reads “the breath of the Almighty.” In 2 Timothy 3:16 “inspiration of God” becomes “inspired of God” in the ASV, the only occurrence of this phrase in any form in this version. The Greek word behind “inspiration”/“inspired” in 2 Timothy 3:16 is the compound word *theopneustos*, meaning “God-breathed” or “breathed out by God.” From this passage we derive the term “the doctrine of inspiration” to describe the origin of the Bible.

Kenneth Kantzer remarks as follows on the significance of *theopneustos*: “By this word, therefore, Paul is asserting that the written documents, called Holy Scripture, are a divine product.”⁴ Benjamin Warfield wrote concerning the meaning of “inspire” and “inspiration”:

Underlying all their use, however, is the constant implication of an influence from without, producing in its object movements and effects beyond its native, or at least its ordinary powers...The Biblical books are called inspired as the Divinely determined products of inspired men; the Biblical writers are called inspired as breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers and becomes Divinely authoritative. Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.⁵

J. I. Packer notes a further implication of the use of “inspiration” by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16:

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, what is inspired is precisely the Biblical writings. Inspiration is a work of God terminating, not in the men who were to write Scripture (as if, having given them an idea of what to say, God left them to themselves to find a way of saying it), but in the actual written product. It is Scripture—*graphie*, the written text—that is God-breathed.⁶

We may summarize the meaning of “inspiration” as it relates to the Bible as the teaching that God is the actual source and author of the Bible throughout all of its parts, having made use of various chosen men in various ages to write the message He wished to communicate to man. By this means, although the Holy Spirit used fallible men as the instruments of writing, they were preserved from error in every respect in everything they wrote. Therefore, the Bible is the inerrant (it **does not** err), infallible (it is **impossible** for it to err) Word of God. If God gave us the Bible, and if “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18), then the Bible is trustworthy and true in every respect. A necessary corollary to the trustworthiness of Scripture, because it is from God, is the **authority** of Scripture. We will set forth evidence for the Bible’s claim of inspiration later, but this statement of the Biblical doctrine will give us a beginning point for discussion of some of the theories that seek to supplant it.

The Plenary Claims

“Plenary” does not appear as a word in the Bible, but the meaning this word connotes concerning the Bible’s inspiration is certainly found therein. This word is derived from a Latin word which means “full.” When one speaks of “plenary inspiration” he means that the Scriptures are inspired throughout, in every part, fully, completely. The inspired psalmist wrote: “The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for

ever” (Psm. 119:160). This statement could not be true apart from plenary inspiration. We must not forget that Paul taught the plenary inspiration of Scripture in his familiar statement, “**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16, KJV, emp. mine throughout, DM).

Paul further emphasized just how full and detailed the Bible’s inspiration is in his statement concerning the Abrahamic promise, “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). His argument here hinges upon the singular form of the noun “seed” that Moses had written fifteen centuries earlier and that God had spoken to Abraham four centuries before Moses (Gen. 22:18). If the Bible is inspired to this degree, then it is inspired entirely, fully—plenarily. The doctrine of plenary inspiration therefore implies that every kind of subject matter (historical, geographical, scientific, ethical, “religious,” etc.) found in the Bible is from God. God’s guidance of the inspired men extended to the minutest parts—even to the very words they wrote **in the original books**.

The Verbal Claims

“Verbal” obviously refers to words. To say that the Scriptures are verbally inspired is to say that the words themselves, **as they were originally written**, are the words God chose and directed the Bible writers to set down, as Packer emphasized above. Numerous Old Testament statements thus testify. Moses prefaced the initial record of the Decalogue by declaring, “And God spake all these **words**, saying” (Exod. 20:1). Later, Moses stated, “And Jehovah said unto Moses, **Write** thou these **words**: for after the tenor of these **words** I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exod. 34:27). God gave the same directions to Jeremiah: “Thus speaketh Jehovah, the

God of Israel, saying, **Write** thee all the **words** that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (Jer. 30:2). Notice in each case that it was not mere general ideas, themes, or concepts, but **specific words** that God gave to these inspired men. This procedure constitutes **verbal inspiration**.

Paul’s statements to Timothy and to the Galatians, as noted above, imply inspiration of the very words the Holy Spirit revealed to the Lord’s chosen vessels. The apostle was very specific about the extent of revelation/inspiration in writing to the Corinthians. After referring to the wisdom of God, which not even wise and powerful men of the world could decipher on their own, he then stated, “But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). But to what extent did the Holy Spirit reveal these mysteries? “Which things also we speak, not in **words** which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual **words**” (1 Cor. 2:13). This verse explicitly states the Bible’s claim of verbal inspiration. In effect, to contend for **verbal** inspiration implies **plenary** inspiration and vice versa.

Inspiration—The Skeptical Contradictions

Those who deny what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration have propounded several theories to explain “inspiration.” All of these have as their necessary design the lowering of our view of Scripture. No such alternate views of how the Bible came to be would ever have been proffered had all men accepted the noble view of inspiration the Bible itself sets forth. Various expositors classify these several theories of inspiration differently, and, likewise, the number of actual theories they identify varies. Warfield subsumes them all under two, one of which he calls “Rationalistic” and the other “Mystical.”⁷

McClintock and Strong likewise list two principal views, besides what they term the “orthodox” or “dynamical” view: (1) “Mystical” (apparently meaning about the same as Warfield by this term), and (2) “Latitudinarian” (identified with Warfield’s “Rationalistic”).⁸ However, in the same context, McClintock and Strong mention two other variant views which they do not label. We will now list the respective theories we have discovered and briefly discuss their principal errors.

The “General Inspiration” Theory

This theory uses “inspiration” and “inspired” in reference to the Bible and its writers in the same way that men speak of the “inspiration” of great authors such as Shakespeare or Homer. A preacher may do an outstanding job in a particular sermon, and someone may say, “He was really inspired today.” This means that the one thus “inspired” has demonstrated an exceptional ability of some sort. While Biblical writers demonstrated exceptional ability in their writing, the Bible’s own claim goes far beyond this. They were not merely “inspired” by a poet’s muse, by a multi-hued sunset, by some great man or woman, nor by any other naturalistic element. The Bible was given “by inspiration of **God**” (2 Tim. 3:16). The writers of the Scriptures were “moved [literally “borne along”] by the Holy Spirit” rather than by their own imaginations or “private interpretations” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The “Bible Contains The Word Of God” Theory

This theory may at first sound innocent, for, indeed, no Bible believer would deny that the Bible contains the Word of God. However, the aim of those who promote this theory is actually to deny that the Bible **is** God’s Word. In saying that it **contains** God’s Word, they also leave room for it to contain myths, fables, legends, and various human

errors. Of course, the liberal theologians are the only ones qualified to “demythologize” the Sacred Text, whereby all of the human element is separated from the Divine! This theory cannot be harmonized with Paul’s declaration that “**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). If God gave us **all of the Bible**, then **all of it is the Word of God**. Thus, the Bible is not merely a bucket or box that has **some** of the Word of God in it, mingled with errors, myths, and such like. Should we accept this theory, where but fallible, biased, subjective men will decide which contents of the Bible are inspired and which are not? The lover of alcoholic beverages might be sorely tempted to disallow the proscriptions against drunkenness, and the fornicator might easily rationalize the prohibitions against fornication as “uninspired.”

The “Theme And General Thoughts Are Inspired” Theory

As with the “Contains” theory discussed above, no Bible believer would deny that the general thoughts and concepts of the Bible are inspired. However, also, as with the “Contains” view, this view does not go far enough to satisfy the claim of Scripture for its origin. It is not merely inspired in its general direction or in its broad subject matter and themes, but, as 2 Timothy 3:16 plainly declares, it is **wholly** inspired—God gave **all** of it. As with the theories of evolution, this theory of inspiration would never have been thought of had men been content to accept what the Bible teaches (and everywhere demonstrates) concerning this subject. We were both surprised and disappointed to find that McClintock and Strong, generally reliable and conservative scholars, advance this view with considerable vigor as the teaching of Scripture.⁹ Warfield correctly classifies this view as a part of the “Rationalistic” approach to inspiration.¹⁰

The “Personal Inspiration” Theory

This theory holds that the Bible writers were enlightened in various degrees, purified morally, and brought into an intimate and immediate communion with God by the Holy Spirit. This new life “on a higher spiritual plane” was then expressed in the things they wrote, and these writings (the Bible) served as God’s revelation of His will to man. The emphasis in this view is the moral and religious quality of the writers, rather than the words they wrote.¹¹ While agreeing that the men who wrote the Bible were, for the most part, men who sought to live morally pure lives and who had a close relationship with God, this is hardly sufficient to explain the Scriptures. If this were all that was required to produce Scripture, then men of such qualities would have continued to produce authorized additions to the Bible since the close of the first century. The emphasis in Scripture is not on the **men who wrote** the Bible, but on the **words which they wrote**: “All **scripture** [writings] is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16).

The “Partial Inspiration” Theory

This theory is similar to the “Contains” theory discussed above, but, instead of making allowances for errors in the Bible in the form of myths, legends, and the like, it allows for errors in matters of science, geography, history, and other such subjects. In this view, only the “religious” teachings of the Bible in the areas of doctrine and practice can be attributed to inspiration. Warfield classifies this as another offshoot of the Rationalistic theory.¹² This theory obviously ignores or denies the stubborn claim of 2 Timothy 3:16 that **all** Scripture—including its statements on every subject—is from God. In the final analysis, any theory of inspiration that denies plenary or verbal inspiration is a mere “partial inspiration” theory.

Numerous other variations of these false theories exist, but those above are the most pronounced. Quite possibly, these counterfeit views of inspiration have done far more damage than all of the open and obvious assaults against the inspired Word could or will ever do. They come from theologians who purport to be scholars as well as men of religion. An uninformed, trusting, and gullible public has been easily deceived and has had its faith stolen away by them. We must reject and expose for the damnable doctrines they are every suggestion concerning inspiration that denies, ignores, or in any way contradicts what the Bible itself teaches.

Inspiration—The Skeptical History

The false theories previously discussed arose out of the various hypotheses of Biblical criticism. The advent of modern Biblical criticism is traceable to some theologians in the middle part of the eighteenth century. These critics (who obviously had too much time on their hands) began speculating that the Pentateuch was written by a plurality of men, instead of by Moses. A century later, Karl H. Graf and Julius Wellhausen popularized the modernistic critical theories on the Old Testament, and F. C. Bauer and his Tübingen School in Germany did the same concerning the New Testament.¹³ These men and their disciples began calling into question almost every previously accepted assurance concerning every part of the Bible as to textual purity, authorship, dating, historicity, and authenticity. The theories of these pseudo-believers attributed the Bible to a process of literary evolution at the hands of mere men, undirected by God. The most radical critics gave up even a pretense of belief in inspiration to any degree.

While the outlandish ideas of the critics did not sway all of the theologians, they most certainly had a telling effect. The modernistic tenets of Biblical criticism had

captured much of the theological scholarship (as the world views it) by the close of the nineteenth century. Benjamin B. Warfield's monumental book, **The Inspiration And Authority Of The Bible** (quoted from earlier), was the outgrowth of this great controversy. At the same time, J. W. McGarvey was waging war on those same theological termites in his still-valuable book, **Biblical Criticism**. It should seem obvious that one cannot stand in doubt of the authenticity of Scripture and, at the same time, believe in its inspiration in any full sense at all. Therefore, the counterfeit theories of inspiration discussed above were put forth by the critics and their disciples in an effort to hold on to some semblance of the doctrine. Again, disappointingly, McClintock and Strong go out of their way in an attempt to overthrow the use of "plenary" and "verbal" in reference to inspiration.¹⁴

A study of inspiration as a historical subject reveals that the rejection of plenary/verbal inspiration has been relatively recent. R. Laird Harris comments on the recency of this rejection as follows:

The Bible has withstood many attacks through the centuries from enemies of all sorts. But in the last century, it has been called upon to withstand repeated attacks in the house of its friends. The Bible is now freely doubted by the preachers in the pulpits and the teachers in the seminary classrooms of our land... For centuries the Church had believed what lies upon the face of the Biblical evidence, that the various books of the Bible were written by the authors whose names they bear and were contemporary more or less with the events they narrate, just as they claim to be. The unity of the various books was not questioned, except, perhaps, by an occasional ancient and extreme heretic like Celsus. These views were not seriously challenged until the late eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century quite opposite views came to the fore... It is safe to say that there is no doctrine, except

those of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, which has been so widely held through the ages of Church history as that of verbal inspiration.¹⁵

Warfield devotes an entire chapter (24 pages) to “The Church Doctrine of Inspiration,” in which he gives irrefragable documentation of the contention of Harris (quoted above). A brief summary statement will suffice to show the animation with which he sets forth his documentation (notwithstanding his denominational terminology):

This church-doctrine of inspiration differs from the theories that would fain supplant it, in that it is not the invention nor the property of an individual, but the settled faith of the universal church of God; in that it is not the growth of yesterday, but the assured persuasion of the people of God from the first planting of the church until today; in that it is not a protean shape, varying its affirmations to fit every new change in the ever-shifting thought of men, but from the beginning has been the church’s constant and abiding conviction as to the divinity of the Scriptures committed to her keeping. It is certainly a most impressive fact—this well-defined, aboriginal, stable doctrine of the church as to the nature and trustworthiness of the Scriptures of God, which confronts with its gentle but steady persistence of affirmation all the theories of inspiration which the restless energy of unbelieving and half-believing speculation has been able to invent in this agitated nineteenth century of ours...Nor do we need to do more than remind ourselves that this attitude of entire trust in every word of the Scriptures has been characteristic of the people of God from the very foundation of the church... The earliest writers know no other doctrine.¹⁶

In spite of the most persistent and overwhelming evidence, proving that Bible believers universally held to a plenary/verbal concept of inspiration until the advent of

modern skeptical criticism, some still brazenly deny this fact. After commenting on how universal the doctrine of verbal inspiration has been throughout the centuries of church history until the past century, Harris wrote, “This, however, is by no means the common conception of the situation. Occasionally an effort is made to picture this doctrine as a recent growth.”¹⁷ In their attack on plenary/verbal inspiration, McClintock and Strong sought to revise history with the following extreme (and equally erroneous) statement:

The theory of verbal inspiration is comparatively recent in the history of theology. There is no such theory stated in the Scriptures...The passages adduced in its favor have no pertinence...The fathers had no definite theory of inspiration at all...It was in the 17th century that the notion of verbal inspiration, which had before only floated about from one individual to another, took the shape of a definite theory, and received proper ecclesiastical sanction.¹⁸

Apparently, the purpose of opponents of plenary/verbal inspiration in affirming a recent advent of the doctrine is to give credibility to their flawed modernistic theories of inspiration. Biblical critics would have the naive believer accept the assertion that their blasphemous views were held by the ancients and that the elite critics therefore hold the “orthodox” view and occupy the “mainstream of Christian thought.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The very term “Modernist,” by which we commonly identify all such destructive critics, provides a clue to their late arrival. If their claim were true, “Ancientists” would fit them much better than “Modernists” would. One simply has to ignore or deny the shouting voice of church history to hold such a view. While the length of time a particular doctrine has been believed does not guarantee its truthfulness, both the antiquity and the universality with

which men down through the centuries have believed in the plenary/verbal inspiration of the Scriptures most surely should cause one to be slow to abandon it, except for overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Besides rejection of plenary/verbal inspiration by destructive critics on the claim that it is neither taught in Scripture nor anywhere else until fairly recently, Modernists have also rejected it on the grounds that it requires a process of “mechanical dictation” whereby God used the writers as no more than “stenographers.” The critics reason that the writing talents and styles of the various authors are clearly distinct from each other, which they allege could not be so if their very words were dictated by God. However, the “mechanical dictation” charge is a straw man invented by faithless men in an attempt to discredit what the Bible actually teaches about its own origin. Harris remarks on this calumny as follows:

Some caricature the doctrine [of verbal inspiration] by saying that they cannot believe so rigid and mechanical a “dictation theory.” Now, rigid the doctrine may be; but it is not mechanical, unless it be held that the Spirit of God has no ways to work except mechanical ways.¹⁹

Likewise, Warfield answered this charge: “It ought to be unnecessary to protest again against the habit of representing the advocates of ‘verbal inspiration’ as teaching that the mode of inspiration was by dictation.”²⁰ Now, if the Scriptures set forth “dictation” as the consistent or exclusive mode of plenary/verbal inspiration, then we would have no hesitancy in accepting, advocating, and defending it. [There are, in fact, some places in the sacred text where it appears that God did directly dictate the words to be written at a given moment (e.g., Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:8; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:18; et al.).] However, for the most

part we are not told **how** God provided the words of Scripture, but that **He did provide them** is most plainly taught, as we shall later demonstrate.

Obviously the inspired writers were able to use their own vocabularies and writing styles, but why should this be thought to conflict with plenary/verbal inspiration? Indeed, it does not, any more than plenary/verbal inspiration demands “mechanical dictation.” Hear Warfield again:

The Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will...By a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of God, and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible.²¹

Significantly, the inspired men themselves understood that they wrote in different styles, all the while claiming guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Steve Gibson made the following significant observations concerning this fact:

The Bible does not teach that the minds of its writers were suspended or entirely passive (“it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” [Acts 15:28]; “after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God” [1 Cor. 7:40—a statement using irony]; “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” [1 Cor. 14:32]). Far from being a recent discovery, the Bible acknowledges such stylistic phenomena in the same breath as it claims inspiration. Peter

recognized Paul's style as more difficult than his own, yet classed both as Spirit-controlled writers of Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16; cf. 2 Pet. 1:20-21)... As sailboats appear to drive themselves, so do inspired men, but in each case there is an unseen propulsion (men "carried along" [2 Pet. 1:21]);...It is helpful to illustrate inspiration by means of a wagon driver guiding horses by reins. The instincts and inclinations of the animals are not extinguished, but employed by the driver's guiding hand to take him just where he wants to go. So it is with the Holy Spirit [W]ho controlled the style and thought-patterns of inspired men to give God's very Word (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). If God could borrow the words and constructions of Hebrew and Greek, could He not also employ the manners and style of their speakers?²²

We have demonstrated that the **rejection** (rather than the **advocacy**) of plenary/verbal inspiration is a relatively recent phenomenon, emanating from the poison soil of modern, unbelieving, destructive Biblical criticism. We have also seen that the critics' objection to plenary/verbal inspiration on the grounds that it constitutes "mechanical dictation" from God is no more than a straw man concocted to excuse their humanistic theories of "inspiration."

Inspiration—The Scriptural Evidence

We come now to consider in more detail some of the Biblical claims for inspiration and to survey a small portion of the vast amount of evidence concerning those claims. By even a mere sampling of this plenitude of evidence, however, the unbiased reader will have no difficulty perceiving what the Bible claims about its own origin.

Primary Passages

We have already given some attention to *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16, so our comments here will

but briefly supplement that material. The passage simply says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (KJV). As earlier noted, the phrase “inspiration of God” is from *theopneustos*, but let us turn our attention to other key words in the passage. It is not “part of,” “some of,” “much of,” or “most of” Scripture that is inspired of God, but “all.” This refers to every part, the whole, or entirety of that which constitutes “Scripture.” The other key word in the passage is “Scripture” [almost exclusively from *graphe* throughout the New Testament (from which we get all of our English “graph” words)]. This word appears some fifty times, with about half of the occurrences in the Gospel accounts and half in Acts through Revelation. Warfield wrote concerning this term:

In every case it bears that technical sense in which it designates the Scriptures by way of eminence, the Scriptures of the OT... We need to note in modification of the broad statement, therefore, only that it is apparent from 2 Peter 3:16 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18) that the NT writers were well aware that the category “Scripture,” in the high sense, included also the writings they were producing, as along with the books of the OT constituting the complete “Scripture” or authoritative Word of God.²³

Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament observes the following applications of *graphe* in the New Testament (which we paraphrase): (1) of the (Holy) Scriptures, or the collection of individual books (e.g., Matt. 21:42; Matt. 22:29; et al.); (2) of individual passages of Scripture (cf. Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; et al.); (3) of the totality of the Old Testament, with emphasis upon the unity of Scripture (e.g. Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:22; 2 Pet. 1:20; et al.).²⁴ It is clear then that the “Scriptures,” all of which Paul said were inspired by God, describe all of the Old Testament books.

However, we should carefully note that, while the primary application of Paul's immortal statement concerning inspiration was to the Old Testament, by extension, his statement applies to any and all other books that should likewise come to constitute "Scripture." We have already demonstrated (see Warfield above) that the New Testament writers were conscious that their writings also constituted Scripture and were also, therefore, inspired (1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:16). The very promise that Christ gave the apostles in the upper room necessarily implied that what they taught, whether by tongue or pen, would be inspired (i.e., provided for them by the Holy Spirit) and would thus constitute "Scripture" (John 14:26; John 16:13; cf. Matt. 10:19-20; Matt. 16:19).

Another passage that sets forth the doctrine of inspiration with unmistakable clarity is 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Note several features of this statement:

1. "Prophecy of scripture" is a phrase referring to the entire body of Scripture (just as "all scripture" does in 2 Timothy 3:16). Prophecy sometimes includes the predictive element, but its primary meaning is one person's speaking for another (cf. Exod. 4:15-16). To refer to the "prophecy of scripture" is to declare that it is a message whose messengers have written it, not from and for themselves, but from and for another.

2. No part of Scripture came from within man or from man's private, unaided imagination, reasonings, or "interpretations." This statement further emphasizes the very meaning of "prophecy" as just noted.

3. All of the Scriptures, rather than coming from men, came from God, Who spoke **through** men.

4. These men who produced Scripture were “moved” (*phero*, “carried or borne along”) by the Holy Spirit to produce the Scriptures. In this fact we have the explanation of the **source** of the “prophecy of scripture” (primarily referring to the Old Testament) and how fallible men could produce an infallible book.

With McClintock and Strong we heartily agree concerning the application of both of these key passages: “These passages relate specially to the Old Testament, but there is at least equal reason to predicate divine inspiration of the New Testament.”²⁵ A more definitive and simple explanation of inspiration could not be desired than what is set forth in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. To those who have trusted the Bible through the centuries, these have been quite sufficient. However, the evidence abounds far beyond these straightforward claims.

Old Testament Claims

What Paul and Peter declared concerning the source of the Scriptures, the Old Testament authors everywhere claimed for their writings: their message was from God. God spoke to Moses “mouth to mouth...not in dark speeches” (Num. 12:8). God told Isaiah, “And I have put my words in thy mouth” (Isa. 51:16). Jeremiah explained the source of his message: “The Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). Likewise, Ezekiel declared, “And he [the Lord] said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them” (Ezek. 3:4). These claims are representative of all of the thirty-nine Old Testament documents. One person has calculated the occurrence of the expression “Thus saith the Lord,” or one similar, no less than 3,808 times in the Old Testament. How truly

the majestic opening statement of Hebrews summarizes what the Old Testament says of its own origin: “God...at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1).

The Way Jesus And The New Testament Writers Viewed The Old Testament

What our Lord believed and taught about inspiration is crucial. If He expressed doubt concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, or if He openly taught that they were a collection of uninspired documents which had evolved to their present state, and included myths, fables, historical errors, and such like, we would be forced to sit up and take notice. In fact, if this were the case, we could not believe in Him without rejecting the Old Testament claim of inspiration. Further, if He had known the Old Testament to be fraudulent concerning its claims of authorship, authenticity, and inspiration, but accommodated Himself to the “superstition” of His day which held the books to be from God, He would Himself have been dishonest and a deceiver of others. Such a man could be neither Son of God nor Savior.

However, if He, as the sinless Son of God—Truth personified (John 14:6)—always treated the Old Testament canon in all of its parts with reverence and respect, ever ascribed them to His Father, and ever upheld their authority as the Word of God, then **we cannot believe in Him without the fullest belief in the inspiration and veracity of those Scriptures.** What did He teach concerning the Scriptures? We may summarize by saying that every word He spoke in reference to them was one calculated to credit them to God and to attribute to them the authority of God. In the temptations of the Lord and on numerous other occasions, He quoted Scripture, with the significant introductory phrase “It is written” (Matt.

4:4; Matt. 4:7; Matt. 4:10; Mark 7:6; Luke 19:46; et al.). Warfield commented on this formula as follows:

The implication [is] that what is thus said or written is of Divine and final authority...The simple adduction in this solemn and decisive manner of a written authority, carries with it the implication that the appeal is made to the indefectible authority of the Scriptures of God, which in all their parts and in every one of their declarations are clothed with the authority of God Himself.²⁶

Jesus made another significant statement concerning the Old Testament in the early part of the Sermon on the Mount:

Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17-19).

Note that He identified the entire Old Testament by the customary titles “Law” and “Prophets.” Then, concerning them, He said His purpose was not to destroy, but to fulfill them. This statement at the same time shows His love, respect, and even protective attitude toward them, and His acknowledgement that they contained predictive statements concerning Himself and His coming into the world. Further, He expressed His unmitigated confidence in every portion of them, not only in every single word or letter, but also even down to the **parts** of the individual letters in the words (for “jot” and “tittle” so signify). Further still, He proclaimed the absolute authority of the Old

Testament (until such a time as He would fulfill it) by pronouncing a curse upon anyone who should presume to break even the “least” of its commandments or teach others to do so. He then pronounced a corresponding blessing upon those who would do and teach its precepts. Behind this remarkable statement of confidence in and respect for the “Law and the Prophets” is the implicit thesis that those books were (and are) from God and must be hallowed as His authoritative Word.

The statement of Jesus in John 10:34-36 cannot be omitted even from a brief survey of His attitude toward the Old Testament:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

The entire appeal of Jesus in answering the calumny of the Jews (who were accusing Him of blasphemy and were threatening to stone Him) was to Scripture. **First**, He called the Scripture “law,” although the passage to which He pointed them is in the Psalms (Psm. 82:6). In so doing, He attributed legal authority to Scripture in its entirety. Nor is this the only place in which He did so (see John 15:25; cf. Psm. 69:4). Thus, just as Peter characterized all of Scripture as “prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:20), the Lord characterized all of it as “law” (cf. 1 Cor. 14:21; Rom. 3:19).

Second, the Lord in this statement made the categorical affirmation, “The scripture cannot be broken.” This fact was the basis of His appeal to the Law in His argument with the Jews. He meant that no man or men could annul, overturn, or break the Sacred Writings. Men could not withstand their authority. This being so, His

accusers must accept the statement from the psalm He cited as absolutely authoritative. **Third**, notice that the statement to which He appealed in the psalm is one of remoteness and insignificance, relatively speaking (and here we intend no irreverence for any word of Scripture). Jesus' reference to such a seemingly remote statement, therefore, indicates with great force that His confidence in the Scriptures applied to their most casual statements and parts as all being infallibly God-given.

We must not pass from this summary without giving at least brief attention to some of the last words Jesus spoke to the apostles before His Ascension:

And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-47).

Note the following:

1. That which he designated "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke 24:44) He likewise identified as "the scriptures" (Luke 24:45), referring to the entire Old Testament.

2. "All things...which are written" (Luke 24:44) and "it is written" (Luke 24:46) (as earlier noticed) are phrases referring to that which God has said and which was to be accepted as unquestionably reliable and authoritative. Where were these things written? In "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms," "the scriptures" which He had just mentioned.

3. He said that **all** things would be fulfilled which the Scriptures spoke concerning Himself (Luke 24:44). His confidence in the Old Testament could not be so perfect, did He not attribute all of it to God.

Space allows us only to mention in passing that all of the New Testament writers followed the Lord perfectly in their evaluation of the Old Testament as being from God. Just as Jesus insisted that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, so did the writers of the Gospel accounts and of Acts (e.g., Matt. 26:56; Mark 15:28; Luke 3:4; John 12:38; Acts 1:16). Paul's letters are so rife with quotations from the Old Testament—on the basis that it was an inspired document—that we need not even cite examples. Additionally, he stated his unabashed and unambiguous declaration of the inspiration of Scripture, which we have already discussed at some length (2 Tim. 3:16). Likewise, Peter quoted extensively from the Old Testament (cf. Acts 2:16-35, et al.), besides making his comprehensive claim as to its source (2 Pet. 1:20-21), which we have also previously discussed. Neither James nor Jude neglected to refer frequently to the Old Testament records with the fullest confidence in their statements. We say without fear of successful contradiction that the Lord and all of the New Testament writers—without exception—treat the Old Testament as the very Word of God, even to its most minute portions of alphabetic markings and to its most apparently remote and casual statements. This is precisely what **plenary/verbal inspiration** means.

The Inspiration of the New Testament

Does the New Testament acknowledge and claim God as its source, as does the Old Testament? It does so in most certain and absolute terms. Two passages that we have only cited now deserve fuller attention. The first

passage is Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 5:18, "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire." Notice that Paul identifies both of these proverbial statements as "Scripture." Interesting, however, is the fact that one can find only the first of them in the Old Testament (Deut. 25:4). The second is from Jesus (Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7). Clearly, Paul called the words of Jesus—**which had been recorded in two New Testament books**—"Scripture." Hendriksen is correct:

The two sayings are clearly co-ordinate. If the first is "Scripture," so is the second. Thus a word spoken by Jesus [and recorded in two New Testament books, DM] is here placed on a par with a saying from the Old Testament canon.²⁷

The second passage is 2 Peter 3:15-16:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Peter referred to the letters of Paul as difficult to understand in places. He said that certain ones even twisted some of his statements, as they did "the other scriptures." It is manifest that Peter here designated the epistles of Paul "Scripture" on a par with all of the Old Testament. Note that he also stated that Paul wrote, not out of his own human wisdom, but "according to the wisdom given to him."

The New Testament writers were thus conscious that their writings were not merely their own opinions, but the words and commands God gave them to deliver. Were

this not so, we would not have any authoritative commands in the epistles, but only polite suggestions. Yet, not a one of the epistles (excepting Philemon) is free of authoritative orders. Paul was not only conscious of the authority of his letters, but of the source of that authority—He was speaking/writing for God the very Word of God. He makes the definitive claim that the words (not the mere thoughts or ideas) which he spoke (whether by tongue or pen) were not from men: “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13). Not only is this a claim of inspiration, but of “word” (verbal) inspiration; else words mean nothing at all. He again stated to the Corinthians the authority behind his words: “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37).

Paul made the same sort of claim in 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.

Note that the message Paul preached (and wrote) was not the “word of men,” but “in truth, the word of God.” No wonder he was not hesitant to write as follows in his second letter to them:

Now we **command** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after **the tradition which they received of us** (2 Thess. 3:6).

First, he issued a firm command, but on the authority of Christ, not his own. [Three other times in the same chapter he referred to commands he had given them (2 Thess. 3:4; 2 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:12).] Additionally, the standard of behavior set before them was none other than “the traditions” Paul had delivered to them—that is, the message Paul had taught them by pen and tongue.

This same consciousness of authority and of Divine inspiration is clearly behind Peter’s statement, “That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles” (2 Pet. 3:2). Peter here put the words of the apostles on equal footing not only with the prophets of old, but with the words of the Lord. When Jude exhorted the brethren to “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), he touched on at least three points relating to inspiration:

1. “The faith” (i.e., the whole body of New Testament teaching/the Gospel) was not thought up nor invented by mere men. Rather, it was “**delivered** to the saints.”

2. “The faith” was “once for all delivered to the saints.” This statement means that, once the body of literature denominated “the faith” was completed, there would be no more. Like the Old Testament, so “the faith” (the New Testament) would be confined only to those documents thus “delivered.”

3. “The faith” was to be defended and protected with great energy. This was so because of its priceless worth, due both to its origin and its content not being **produced by** the saints, but being **delivered to** the saints by the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

With one final passage we will conclude this brief survey of the indications of New Testament inspiration. Almost the closing words of the New Testament (and of

the Bible) are a resounding testimony to the inspiration of the entire Bible:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

It is obvious that these warnings primarily apply to the book of Revelation itself, which warnings constitute a powerful and positive declaration that this book is not the message of a man, but of God. In this and this alone is the explanation of such stringent warnings not to tamper with a single word (yes, “verbal” inspiration is most surely implied). It is called a book of “prophecy” twice, in the same sense that the Old Testament is composed of books of prophecy—books penned by men who wrote/spoke for God with His message for men.

However, we just as appropriately apply this sober dual warning to the entire Bible. All of its other books, like the book of Revelation itself, are “prophecy” in the sense that the men who wrote them were delivering God’s message. They all, in one way or another, promise plagues (eventuating in eternal torment) and exclusion from the paradise of heaven to those who would dare tamper with a single word of the inspired text so as to change its teaching. Like Revelation, the actual words of the Bible in its entirety were given by God and must be preserved unchanged throughout.

Inspiration—The Skeptics In The Church

The first step the liberals took in trying to destroy the church was either to ignore or deny the Bible’s authority where it limited their change agenda, while

continuing their lip service to the doctrine of inspiration. The next great battle we face—and it is already upon us— involves the second crucial step: denial of the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible. The second step is but the natural by-product of the first. Is the Bible the very Word of God, or is it the mere words of men? After all, if one is not going to respect its authority in all things, there is little practical value in affirming or defending its inspiration claims.

We have for some time had among us our own class of “advanced thinkers,” and their numbers are growing. Several years ago a Herald of Truth television sermon delivered by Harold Hazelip contained the following assessment of the Bible:

We are assuming that it [the Bible] is the inspired Word of God, though this certainly is also an area in which we should be open to whatever facts are pertinent. Any observer of religion is aware that our problem is a legitimate one.²⁸

As early as 1975, Leroy Garrett referred to “jars and conflicts” that were “abundant in scripture” and depicted the Bible as a book that was not “some sort of heavenly document that escapes man’s imperfect handiwork.” However, he assures us, “there are no errors or mistakes that really matter.”²⁹

John T. Willis, a teacher in the religion department of Abilene Christian University, affirms that “the Bible **contains** the word of God, but not ordinarily or absolutely as it is ordinarily read.”³⁰ In another swipe at inspiration, he declares, “The Bible claims to be inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). There is **no way to prove or disprove this claim** absolutely, although arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue.”³¹

At least one man who still claims to be part of the Lord’s church has gone much further than those quoted

above. A fellow religion faculty member of Willis for many years was Carroll D. Osburn, who this year (2005) announced his retirement after seventeen years at ACU. His comments are both revealing and radical relative to the subject of inspiration, for which reason we feel compelled to quote him at length and respond to his statements at length” We will begin with his “history lesson” on the rise of “Fundamentalism”:

This emerging “liberalism” [i.e., of Existentialist Rudolf Bultmann, early 20th century, DM] so restructured the contours of the Christian faith that a vigorous reaction developed to reaffirm traditional postures, and “Fundamentalism” gathered momentum. Emphasis was placed upon Biblical infallibility. The “plenary verbal inspiration” of the Bible was mandated. Truth was equated with the King James Version. Evolution was denied angrily and science became viewed as a threat to the faith. Against literary-historical criticism, interpretations derived by “proof-texting,” i.e., understandings derived apart from historical and literary criticism, emerged due to doctrinal necessity... Denunciation of culture abounded, along with strong anti-philosophical, anti-theological, and anti-educational stances....

In more recent times, a debate has raged over the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. The debate involves the question whether inspiration necessitates the truth of virtually everything in the Bible, whether scientific, geographic, historical, or doctrinal. Some argue that inspiration need only involve inerrancy in those matters vital for salvation. Others countered that “limited inerrancy” is impossible...So, doctrinal necessity determines literary and historical conclusions.³²

Please observe the following from Osburn’s statements:

1. Like McClintock and Strong, he wants us to believe that “plenary” and “verbal” claims for inspiration are latecomers, arising in the early twentieth century. Warfield and Harris demonstrated that his assertion is false.

2. He apparently wants us to believe that the doctrine of Biblical infallibility arose from an extreme reaction to Bultmann's existentialism. (He disparages "Fundamentalism" and mentions it with seeming disgust.) Rather, men who believed this doctrine (as almost everyone who vested any faith in the Bible had done for nineteen centuries) began reemphasizing it in response to Bultmann's radical influence.

3. He likewise alleges that "plenary verbal inspiration" was "mandated" in response to Modernism and Existentialism. He is wrong again. This doctrine was "mandated" (for all who professed faith in the Bible as God's Word) because the Bible teaches it and it was under severe attack.

4. His averment that "truth was equated with the King James Version" is a straw man. While we hold the KJV in high esteem as completely reliable and trustworthy, only an infinitesimal number of extremist brethren equate it alone with the Truth.

5. He impugns the motives of those who arrive at their understanding of the Bible by searching out all that it says on every subject. He accuses us of arriving at our conclusions "due to doctrinal necessity." Perhaps it would be better to wonder if Dr. Osburn may not have arrived at some of his conclusions "due to doctrinal necessity," having learned them from Modernists at Vanderbilt and St. Andrews. He certainly did not arrive at them from studying the Bible.

6. He accuses "Fundamentalists" of denouncing culture, philosophy, theology, and education. We plead guilty to opposing all of these items as they stand in opposition to God's Word. Paul warned against conforming to current culture (Rom. 12:2), which is striving to remake our nation into a mold of absolute secularism (read "hedonism"). Philosophy consists mainly of the vain,

transient, godless reasonings of men that Paul warned could ruin us (Col. 2:8). For more than a century, “theology” has largely been synonymous with Rationalism, Modernism, Existentialism, and, now, Postmodernism, all of which are fancy words for infidelity. “Education” is bane or blessing, depending on what one teaches and/or learns. It is one of the great and tragic ironies of modern times that most of the institutions of higher education founded and operated by brethren to strengthen the faith of young people have been prostituted so as to tear down their faith. The leaders in the Change-Agent movement are mostly those who have obtained advanced degrees and have become too educated to listen to God anymore, as we will discuss below. One would have to oppose God to favor the current crop of culture, philosophy, theology, and education.

7. He implies that which he will later state explicitly: “Biblical inerrancy” does not demand inerrancy throughout the Bible. He again impugns motives when discussing the inerrancy debate. Our faith in Biblical inerrancy does not rest upon some external “doctrinal necessity,” but upon the “doctrinal necessity” of believing what the Bible teaches about its own origin and nature.

Osburn identifies Thomas B. Warren and J.D. Thomas as “representative of the hermeneutical methodology of twentieth-century Churches of Christ.” They are thereby some of those repugnant “Fundamentalists” who have so little sense as to believe “the Bible is the authoritative word of God which must be understood inductively according to principles of rationality” (so Osburn favors approaching the Sacred Text irrationally, we suppose). Osburn clearly implies that these men are naive in believing that the Bible “contains God’s own words and is inerrant,” and in viewing “discrepancies as only apparent.”³³

Osburn’s elitist, judgmental, and liberal comments get worse:

Fundamentalist methodology dominated thought in the Churches of Christ in much of the twentieth century. While the Fundamentalist approach stresses the existence of the supernatural and the inspiration of Scripture, it approaches truth more like a giant “grid,” all parts of which must cohere. So, Biblical interpretation is not conducted in terms of literary and historical controls, but in “proof-texting” fashion to provide “proofs” for the various elements in the “grid.” As such, presuppositions control the use of Biblical data. No interpretation can be correct which does not cohere with the “truth grid.” But, citing a passage here and there from any part of the Bible, assuming that one has the mind of God on a matter, leaves much to be desired.³⁴

Please observe:

1. We have never used any sort of “giant grid” in our Bible study, nor have we ever heard of one before reading Dr. Osburn’s comments. We freely confess, however, to approaching our study of the Bible so as to make each of its parts “cohere” with the rest of it (which obviously is not a great concern to Modernists and Liberals).

2. Dr. Osburn and his ilk are the ones who have the “grid” into which everything must fit. He even names it the “literary and historical controls.” Any view of the Bible or any doctrine in the Bible that does not fit this theological grid is just so much ignorant “Fundamentalism,” we suppose.

3. He implies that without consulting the “literary and historical controls” of Modernists (such as himself), we cannot possibly comprehend the meaning of Scripture. Just what did earnest seekers of Truth do before the skeptical Bible critics came along? By Osburn’s reasoning, those noble Jews at Berea searched the Scriptures in vain, for they could not possibly comprehend them without the Modernist hermeneutical template (Acts 17:11). Likewise,

Paul's exhortation that brethren understand what he wrote (Eph. 3:4; Col. 2:2) must have left them completely bumfuzzled because they lived eighteen centuries too early to possess and employ the gallimaufry of "literary and historical controls" invented by Johnny-come-lately unbelieving critics.

4. He assumes a motive, again, for the "Fundamentalist" approach to the Bible: "Presuppositions control the use of Biblical data." We turn this charge back on him and his comrades. We know of none who approach the Bible with more preconceived ideas, biases, and presuppositions than Modernists. (E.g., its claimed authors are not reliable; it is the product of literary evolution; it contains historical, geographical, and scientific errors; it contains contradictions; it contains myths; it cannot possibly be explained in terms of plenary, verbal inspiration, et al.)

5. Osburn's charge that seeking to understand the Bible by studying every passage touching on a given subject constitutes "assuming that one has the mind of God" reveals just how elitist he is. We find his statement to be very condescending. Has this erudite scholar never heard of exegesis? By searching the Scriptures, we do not assume that we have the mind of God. If we thus assumed, we would hardly need to do any Scripture study. Rather, in our study we are seeking to know the mind of God insofar as He has revealed it through His inspired Word. To what source would this professor send us for this information, if not the Bible?

We highly recommend to Dr. Osburn a colloquial proverb that might serve him well: "When one finds himself in a hole, he should stop digging." He just keeps digging his hole deeper. Under the heading **Conservatism**, he writes:

Alternatively [i.e., to “Fundamentalism”], within conservative circles, a significant revision of Fundamentalist views has emerged. While retaining belief in the existence of the supernatural and emphasis upon the historicity of the Christian faith, other matters are viewed differently. The authority of the Biblical text is maintained, for instance, but “verbal” inspiration has given way to “full” inspiration, the use of the Greek text has supplanted the KJV, and texts are studied in their literary and historical contexts...Rejecting arrogant exclusivism, Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.

Conservatives [with whom Osburn identifies], then, maintain belief in the existence of the supernatural and take a high view of Scripture, but avoid the propositional truth approach of Fundamentalists. The text, analyzed according to rigorous application of literary and historical controls, is allowed to shape an emerging theology. Truth exists, but conservatives content themselves with the search for truth, laying no unique claim to its possession. Tolerance and constructive interaction with other schools of thought is characteristic of their work.³⁵

We cannot resist a few observations about the foregoing material, also:

1. Homosexuals have wordnapped the good and beautiful word “gay” and corrupted it to their own wicked end. Likewise, Osburn and company have taken the honorable word “conservative” and warped and corrupted it. Those old Fundamentalists are rascals, but enlightened Liberals have been able morph some of their obsolete and naive ideas into a new “Conservatism.” Osburn is as near to being a conservative (in any Biblical sense) as this writer is to being an Episcopal priest.

2. When he says “other matters are viewed differently” in this new “conservatism,” he speaks the truth. He freely admits to denying verbal inspiration, while

claiming to believe in “full” inspiration. He writes nonsense. Does he not know that the definition of *plenary* is “full”? He contradicts himself. There can be no “full” inspiration in any real sense unless the words themselves are God-given.

3. He may have revealed the motive for his weak view of Scripture in castigating what he perceives to be “arrogant exclusivism.” He just cannot bear for his theological peers even to hint that he is narrow or dogmatic. His “tolerance and constructive interaction with other schools of thought” allow him to find “Christian fellowship” in “a broader arena.” This man has sold his soul and whatever convictions he may ever have had in the Biblical doctrine of inspiration for the camaraderie he craves with denominational theologians. He got even less than Esau’s infamous mess of pottage in the bargain.

4. Osburn gets very close to implying (if indeed he does not) that one cannot discern the meaning of Scripture from the KJV and that one must be able to read the Greek text in order to do so. (We suppose he would demand the Hebrew text for the Old Testament, as well.) He surely has not thought through the implications of this pronouncement. His “conservative” approach takes the Bible right out of the hands of all but a miniscule number of the populace. He would thereby plunge the believing world into a new Biblical “Dark Age,” reminiscent of what the Roman Catholic church did when it held God’s Word hostage for centuries by keeping it in a language known only by its clerics.

5. He eschews any “propositional truth” approach to the Bible, but we suppose He forgot that Jesus and the inspired writers filled the Scriptures with just such statements. He claims that this new “conservative” approach will shape an “emerging theology,” and he all

but boasts of always searching, but never possessing, the truth. Is Osburn not aware that Paul identified those of his type (i.e., “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”) as men who “withstand the truth,” being “corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Tim. 3:7-8)?

6. The fumes of superiority, condescension, egotism, and elitism waft freely and unmistakably from Osburn’s blather.

As mentioned earlier, we repeat for emphasis the fact that each of the men cited and quoted above has occupied classrooms filled with trusting and unsuspecting Christian young people by the hundreds each year for many years. Doubtless, these are not the only such professors in the religion departments of “Christian” universities. They have had boards and administrators who have protected them while they delivered their poison. Additionally, numerous “sophisticated” congregations exist in which, if the preacher preached a strong sermon advocating the plenary/verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, he would either be laughed out of the pulpit or figuratively “tarred and feathered,” if not both and in that order. There are many who have not yet gone this far, but who nonetheless support and encourage, or, at least, refuse to oppose and expose, those who have. Those who remain silent may as well deny inspiration themselves by behaving so irresponsibly. Thus, we have seen, and are seeing before our very eyes, the “ultimate capitulation” by some who still profess to be members of the church of Christ. Why do folk who have thus capitulated continue any pitiful pretense of religion, much less desire to continue to be in the church of Christ? We are already in the beginning stages of the next great battle among the saints: is or is not the Bible the plenary and verbally inspired Word of God?

Conclusion

Warfield summed up the ungodly work of the skeptical theorists well:

Wherever five “advanced thinkers” assemble, at least six theories as to inspiration are likely to be ventilated. They differ in every conceivable point, or in every conceivable point save one. They agree that inspiration is less pervasive and less determinative than has heretofore been thought, or than is still thought in less enlightened circles. They agree that there is less of the truth of God and more of the error of man in the Bible than Christians have been wont to believe. They agree accordingly that the teaching of the Bible may be, in this, that, or the other,—here, there, or elsewhere—safely neglected or openly repudiated. So soon as we turn to the constructive side, however, and ask wherein the inspiration of the Bible consists; how far it guarantees the trustworthiness of the Bible’s teaching; in what of its elements is the Bible a divinely safeguarded guide to truth: the concurrence ends and hopeless dissension sets in. They agree only in the common destructive attitude towards some higher view of the inspiration of the Bible, of the presence of which each once seems supremely conscious.³⁶

Through the centuries, skeptics of every stripe have waged a relentless battle in their effort to undermine the inspiration of the Bible. Until fairly recent times all such men made no pretense at believing in God or even in being religious. As we have shown, the more recent attacks have arisen from the Biblical critics. These attacks have been all the more dangerous because they have come from supposedly religious men—professed “believers,” yea, even from teachers of religion. Their numerous false theories of inspiration, for all their effort, have not weakened, destroyed, or otherwise changed a single piece of evidence upon which the doctrine that the Bible is the

plenary, verbally inspired Word of God has stood and does stand. Although they have robbed many men, women, and young people of their faith, it is not because their case is so strong and the Bible is vulnerable to their ungodly attacks, but because the faith of men and women has been so weak. We must never give up the priceless Truth of inspiration, for, having surrendered that, we will have surrendered all.

If the Bible is not God's inspired Word, we can know but little about the nature of God and nothing about how to live in such a way as to please Him. Indeed, we cannot even know that He desires us to live in a certain way, nor that there are rewards and punishments awaiting all men, depending on how they live. **Those who rob men of their faith in the Bible as God's faithful, infallible, and inerrant Word rob them of everything of essential value!** We beg those who have thus capitulated to restudy the evidence and be converted. Failing this, we urge them to be honest enough to flee to the bogs and swamps of outright infidelity (toward which they are rapidly moving) and leave us alone.

Endnotes

1 I originally wrote some of the following material in a different form for **The Gospel Journal** (Jan. 2001).

2 I originally wrote some of the following material in a different form for the 1989 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures. "False Theories Versus the Truth on Inspiration," **The Bible None Like It**, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Memphis: Memphis School of Preaching, 1989), pp. 88-113.

3 All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated (as here).

4 Kenneth S. Kantzer, ed., "Inspiration," **The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967).

5 Benjamin B. Warfield, **The Inspiration And Authority Of The Bible**, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948), p. 131.

6 J. I. Packer, "Inspiration," **New Bible Dictionary**, ed. J. D. Douglas, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1982), p. 516.

7 Warfield, pp. 112-13.

8 John McClintock & James Strong, **Cyclopaedia Of Biblical, Theological, And Ecclesiastical Literature** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969 reprint), 4:613-14.

9 Ibid., pp. 614-15.

10 Warfield, p. 131.

11 Alfred E. Garvie, "Inspiration," **Dictionary Of The Bible**, ed. James Hastings (Lynn, MA: Hendrickson, 1937).

12 Warfield, p. 113.

13 James Orr, ed., "Criticism of the Bible," **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1939), 2:751-52.

14 McClintock & Strong, pp. 614-15.

15 R. Laird Harris, **Inspiration And Canonicity Of The Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), pp. 22-23, 72.

16 Warfield, pp. 106-108.

17 Harris, p. 72.

18 McClintock & Strong, pp. 614-15.

19 Harris, p. 20.

20 Warfield, p. 173, fn. 9.

21 Ibid., pp. 173, 422.

22 Steve Gibson, **Studies In 1 And 2 Thessalonians And Philemon**, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid, 1988), pp. 318-19. Gibson wrote this excellent statement when he was a faithful Gospel preacher. Sad to say, he has since abandoned the faith.

23 Warfield, pp. 231-32.

24 Gottlob Schrenk, "Graphe," **Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament**, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. & ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 1:751-54.

25 McClintock & Strong, 4:612. It is amazing that these scholars can be so lucid on this point, but so irrational on the Bible's claims of verbal and plenary inspiration.

26 Warfield, pp. 239-40.

27 William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary: Exposition Of The Pastoral Epistles** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957), p. 181.

28 Harold Hazelip, "The Search for Truth," **Herald of Truth**, TV sermon No. 986, as quoted in "Highland Report," **Contending For The Faith**, ed. Ira Y. Rice, Jr. (November 1973), 4:7. Hazelip later became head of Harding Graduate School, (Memphis, TN) and, still later (1986), president of David Lipscomb University (Nashville, TN), from which he since retired

(1997). Upon the resignation (2005) of Steve Flatt as DLU president, Hazelip has been appointed "interim president."

29 Leroy Garrett, **Restoration Review** (October 1975), pp. 150-51.

30 John T. Willis, "Men Spoke from God (3)," **Firm Foundation** (December 16, 1980), p. 807.

31 John T. Willis, ed., **The World And Literature Of The Old Testament** (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1979), p. 11.

32 Carroll D. Osburn, **The Peaceable Kingdom** (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), pp. 57-60.

33 Ibid., p. 62.

34 Ibid., p. 63.

35 Ibid., pp. 63-65.

36 Warfield, p. 105.

CHAPTER 2

Because Of Its Indestructibility

B. J. Clarke

Introduction

PERHAPS THERE IS NO greater need within the world, the religious world, or even our own brotherhood, than to re-establish the claim of the Bible's inspiration. This is true because so often when folks engage in religious discussion today, appeal is made to book, chapter and verse to settle the controversy, and often, the resultant attitude toward the book, chapter and verse cited is: "So what if the Bible says that. It is an ancient book which has no right to tell me what to do." People who make such statements are ignorant of the fact that the Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In view of the modern attitude toward the Bible, we must once again dedicate ourselves to demonstrating that the Bible is **beyond mere human production**. Although men were employed in the writing of Holy Scripture, these men "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).¹

Fortunately, God has not left us without witness concerning the proof and demonstration of the inspiration of the Bible. Numerous strands of evidence, both internal and external, are abundantly available to the student who wishes to ascertain the nature of the Book of books, the Bible. My particular assignment is to explore the

characteristic of the indestructibility of the Bible as a proof of its inspiration.

The Indications Of Its Indestructibility

1. *The claim of incorruptibility.* The Bible itself claims to be incorruptible. Peter spoke of those who had been born again:

not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

According to these verses, the Word of God is incorruptible; it lives and abides forever, and, unlike the flesh and grass, which quickly come and quickly go, the Word of God endures forever. The word “incorruptible” in 1 Peter 1:23 is the translation of the Greek word *aphtharos*. This same word is employed by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:17 to describe Jesus as “immortal.” Therefore, the words of Christ are just as indestructible as Christ is Himself. Jesus declared, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35). In fact, it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail (Luke 16:17).² Almighty God has the power to breathe life into the Scriptures (John 6:63) and to keep them alive (Heb. 4:12). The Word of the Lord is settled forever in heaven (Psm. 119:89). The apostle John spoke of his love for the truth, for others who loved the truth, and expressed his confidence that the truth that abided in him and others would be with them **forever** (2 John 2). Furthermore, since Jesus declared that the words which He has spoken will judge us in **the last day** (John 12:48), He obviously expected for the Bible to survive until judgment day!

Indeed, the Bible claims to be indestructible. However, it is one thing to claim indestructibility and quite another to demonstrate it. It is rare for a book to survive twenty years of perennial success even if it undergoes no criticism or persecution. An even smaller percentage of books survive for a hundred years. The percentage of books which survive for 1000 years is so minuscule that only the tiniest of fractions could be used to number such books. Yet the Old Testament is over 3500 years old while the New Testament is almost 2000 years old. It has been centuries since the Bible's claims to indestructibility were made. Accordingly, the continued existence of the Bible today stands as a testimony to the veracity of its claims to be indestructible. An unknown poet wrote the following piece about the Bible:

THE BIBLE LIVES!

Generation follows generation—yet it lives.
Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.
Kings, dictators, presidents come and go—yet it lives.
Hated, despised, cursed—yet it lives.
Doubted, suspected, criticized—yet it lives.
Condemned by atheists—yet it lives.
Scoffed at by scorners—yet it lives.
Exaggerated by fanatics—yet it lives.
Misconstrued and misstated—yet it lives.
Ranted and raved about—yet it lives.
Its inspiration denied—yet it lives.

2. *The chronology of invulnerability.* Suppose that there was a man who had lived upon this earth for 1800 years. And suppose that during this 1800 years that this man had often been thrown into the sea and yet could not be drowned; that he had frequently been thrown to the wild beasts who were unable to devour him; that he had many times been forced to drink deadly poisons that never did him any harm; that he had often been bound in chains and locked in prisons and dungeons, yet he had

always been able to throw off the chains and escape from his captivity; that he had repeatedly been hanged till his enemies thought him dead, yet when his body was cut down he sprang to his feet and walked away as though nothing had happened; that hundreds of times he had been burned at the stake, till there seemed to be nothing left of him, yet as soon as the fires were out he leaped up from the ashes as well and as vigorous as ever! **We would call such a man indestructible!** Such a man would be super-human! Yet this is exactly how we should regard the Bible! This is practically the way in which the Bible has been treated. It has been burned, drowned, chained, put in prison, and torn to pieces, **YET NEVER DESTROYED!**³

Bernard Ramm wrote:

A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.

Like the man described above, the Bible has shown itself to be impervious, imperishable, impregnable, indissoluble, incombustible, indomitable, ineffaceable, ineradicable, inextinguishable and invincible toward the vicious assaults hurled against it. A brief survey of these attacks covers a vast expanse of time, including both ancient and modern times.

1. One of the more ancient attempts to destroy the Word of God was that of King **Jehoiakim**. During the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign as king, God instructed Jeremiah:

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from

the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin (Jer. 36:2-3).

The imprisoned Jeremiah called for his scribe Baruch, and “Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book” (Jer. 36:4). After the Word of God had been faithfully transmitted from the mind of God, to the mouth of Jeremiah, to the roll upon which Baruch wrote, Jeremiah, knowing that he had been taken out of circulation due to his imprisonment, commanded Baruch to take the written message and to read it “in the ears of the people in the Lord’s house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities” (Jer. 36:6).⁴

The message of judgment toward Israel and Judah did not prove to be a popular one. Michaiah heard the initial reading of the message, and he, in turn, communicated that message to the king’s princes. Evidently the princes wanted to hear the message for themselves, and so they sent Jehudi to Baruch to demand that he give them a personal reading of this message. Baruch read the message in their ears and “they were afraid both one and another, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words” (Jer. 36:16).

The princes did, in fact, tell the king about the content of the scroll which Jeremiah had written via Baruch. The king dispatched Jehudi to retrieve the scroll in order that he might read it to the king:

And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the

hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth (Jer. 36:21-23).

What brazen disregard for the Word of God! The context reveals that Jehoiakim slashed and burned the Word of God because he did not like the prediction contained therein that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy the land (Jer. 36:29). In spite of the pleas of three of his princes that he not burn the Word of God, Jehoiakim would not hear them and proceeded to carry out his incendiary act.

Did Jehoiakim succeed in destroying the Word of God and reducing it to dust and ashes? Not in the least! Jehoiakim learned that the Word of God is incombustible. Whereas Jehoiakim was able to destroy the ink and material upon which God's message was recorded, he was not able to destroy the message itself. The king of Babylon did come, and he did destroy the land. God's prediction was not nullified by the blasphemous actions of Jehoiakim. I cannot help but look at Jehoiakim's actions and think of the statement, "You can smash the barometer that tells you the storm is coming, but that won't stop the storm from coming."

Further evidence of the insignificance of Jehoiakim's slashing and burning the roll is seen in God's instructions to Jeremiah following the episode:

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned... Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of

Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words (Jer. 36:27-28; Jer. 36:32).

What impotence is seen in Jehoiakim's penknife and hearth! Not long after his action, Jeremiah and Baruch produced another roll by inspiration of God. In fact, this roll had even more words added to it than did the first roll. Perhaps those words included a reference to Jehoiakim's incompetent attempt to destroy the Word of God. Ask the average man on the street today to identify Jehoiakim and chances are you'll receive nothing but a blank stare. Contrariwise, ask the average man on the street if he has ever heard of the Bible before and you'll get a vastly different answer. B. C. Goodpasture noted that "Jehoiakim died in disgrace and, as the prophet said, was given the 'burial of an ass'" (Jer. 22:18-19).⁵ Jehoiakim is dead; the Bible lives on!

2. One of the infamous tyrants of world history was **Antiochus Epiphanes**, a Syrian ruler who came to prominence during the period between the Testaments. Upon becoming ruler in 175 B. C., Antiochus Epiphanes dedicated himself to severe persecution of the Jews. He accomplished such by destroying their temple, selling Jewish citizens into slavery, forcing Greek culture and religion upon them and seeking to destroy all their copies of Sacred Scripture. Sabbath observance, circumcision, and observance of all Jewish laws were forbidden under penalty of death. Antiochus Epiphanes ordered his officials to conduct a monthly search to determine if anyone possessed a copy of the Law of Moses or had been circumcised in accordance therewith. Offenders were put to death.⁶ Today, the name of Antiochus Epiphanes is largely a lost name in the dusty pages of ancient history books. On the other hand, the Old Testament Scriptures which he sought to destroy, live on!

3. One of the most egotistical enemies of the Bible and Christianity was **Diocletian**, emperor of Rome in the early part of the fourth century A. D. He was Jehoiakim “gone to seed” because he took great pleasure in the burning of every copy of the Scriptures he could get his hands on. Moreover, after a couple of years of these persecutions, he became so arrogant that he claimed to have exterminated the Christian writings from the face of the earth. He even erected a monument over the ashes of burned Bibles with the inscription: *Extincto Nomine Christianorum*—“Extinct is the name of Christians.”⁷ He also fashioned a medal with the engraving, “The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored.”⁸ Diocletian’s boast was premature, to say the least, especially in view of the fact that just twenty years after the alleged extinction of the Sacred Writings, another emperor by the name of Constantine dedicated himself to put the New Testament in all of the churches of his empire. In fact, Constantine offered a sizable reward to anyone who would deliver a copy of the Scriptures to him. Within twenty-five hours Constantine was offered fifty copies of the Word of God.⁹ Therefore, it is not the Bible that has been reduced to dust and ashes, but rather it is Diocletian whose physical remains are nothing but a heap of dust and ashes! Can you imagine Diocletian’s stunned countenance if he returned to the earth today to discover that more had been written about the Bible than about any other thousand volumes combined? What would Diocletian think of his medal and his monument today if he knew that the Bible has been translated into more languages than any other volume and that it has been sent into more regions of the earth than any other book?

4. It seems that a hatred for the Bible and an arrogant claim of extinguishing it often go hand in hand. For example, the French infidel **Voltaire** (1694-1778), declared

in 1778, “One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker.”¹⁰ He bragged, “It took twelve men to start Christianity. One will destroy it.”¹¹ He called Christ “the cursed wretch.”¹² Geisler and Nix observe that “only fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.”¹³ Moreover, approximately two hundred years after Voltaire’s prediction that the Bible would be eliminated from the earth, a first edition of Voltaire’s work sold in Paris for eleven cents. On that very same day, December 24th, 1933, the British government purchased an ancient New Testament manuscript, *Codex Sinaiticus*, from the Soviets for half a million dollars. This ancient manuscript, dating about 350 A. D., is still on display in the British Museum and highly prized.¹⁴

5. **Thomas Paine** is remembered by many students of history as an author whose writings served as a catalyst to the colonists declaring their independence. Unfortunately, Paine took his talented pen in hand and authored **The Age Of Reason**, a work in which he ridiculed the Bible and its claims. Amazingly, Paine avowed a belief in God, but his words in **The Age Of Reason** implied otherwise, so much so that it became known as “The Atheists’ Bible.” Like Voltaire, Paine boasted of the coming demise of the Bible, except that Paine was much bolder in his assessment of how soon the Bible would be obsolete. He said, “In five years from now there will not be a Bible in America. I have gone through the Bible with an axe and cut down all its trees.” The fact of the matter is that within ten years of this arrogant claim, Thomas Paine was a largely forgotten man. The sunset of his life was spent in bitter isolation. In fact he is reported to have said:

I would give worlds if I had them, had **The Age of Reason** never been written...O Lord, help

me! Christ help me!...Send even a child to stay with me, for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one.¹⁵

Ironically, after Paine died, his printing press was also employed to print Bibles and Biblical materials.

6. **Robert Ingersoll**, an American agnostic, held up a copy of the Bible on one occasion and arrogantly asserted, “In fifteen years I will have this book in the morgue.” Ingersoll was correct in affirming that something would be in the morgue in fifteen years, but it wasn’t the Bible. It was Robert Ingersoll. Furthermore, after his death, a man by the name of Robert Garry sat and wrote Bible lessons at the very desk at which Mr. Ingersoll had worked to try to discredit the Bible.¹⁶

A poet by the name of Blake, well wrote:

Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;
Mock on, mock on; 'tis all in vain!
You throw the dust against the wind,
And the wind blows it back again.¹⁷

Another unnamed poet lauded the indestructibility of God’s Word when he wrote:

Despised and torn in pieces, by infidels decried,
The thunderbolts of hatred, the haughty cynic’s
pride—
All these have railed against it in this and other
lands
Yet dynasties have fallen, and still the Bible
stands!¹⁸

7. Tragically, one of the most concerted efforts to destroy the Scriptures came from **the apostate church in Rome**. Pope Innocent ordered French Bibles to be burned at Metz in 1199, and he forbade the people to have any more. A little over three decades later Pope Gregory IX, along with the Council of Terragona in Spain, ordered the people to give

up their Bibles for burning. 10,000 Bibles were burned at Graz in Steiermark on August 8, 1600 at the mandate of Ferdinand II. The Jesuits actually boasted of burning 60,000 Bibles in 1637. In fact, so customary was the practice of burning Bibles, that some of the ancient cities were lighted with bonfires made of Bibles.

It is a bad enough mark against the Catholic church that they would burn Bibles to keep them from an ignorant public, but the ancient Catholic church went much further than burning Bibles; they even burned people who supported the spread of the Bible. For example, John Wycliffe was condemned by the Synod of Oxford in 1382 for being a heretic. And what was his crime? He translated the Bible. So detested was Wycliffe that years after his death, Catholic authorities exhumed his body, burned it, and cast his ashes into the brook Swift. Similarly, William Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic authorities on October 6th, 1536. And why was he murdered? Because he made an English translation of the Bible in 1525.¹⁹ Example after example of such atrocities could be chronicled here if space permitted. Apparently, the Catholic church thought that they were destroying the Bible by destroying the men who were promoting and advancing its circulation. What they didn't realize is that they were fighting against Someone much bigger than John Wycliffe or William Tyndale. They were fighting against God. The poet Flynn thoughtfully captures the ineptitude of the Bible's opponents:

They burned Truth in the market place
And thought their work complete;
But next day, with a smiling face,
They met it on the street.
They threw it in a dungeon damp
And thought it was no more;
But lo, it walked with lighted lamp
Among them as before.

They scorned and ostracized it,
And ordered it to depart;
But still it dwelt in all the land
And challenged every heart.²⁰

It is important to observe just here that attempts to destroy the Bible are not confined to human bonfires and book burning. The Catholic church no longer burns people or Bibles at the stake, but they are still guilty of seeking to destroy the Word of God by teaching doctrines and commandments of men contrary to the doctrine of Christ revealed in the written Word. In fact, the following quotation summarizes the means by which religious people have attempted to destroy the Scriptures:

The Bible has not only survived the persecution heaped upon it by its enemies, but it has overcome the many perversions and abuses heaped upon it by its professed friends. Jewish leaders of the time of Christ tried to make void the Word of God by their traditions. (Cf. Matt. 15:6). Then, after the arrival of Christianity, the apostate Catholic Church muzzled the Bible by chaining it to the pulpits and making it the property of their hierarchy. Then came Protestantism which, while claiming to love and believe the Bible, has nevertheless perverted it, corrupted its simplicity and twisted and warped it to suit their sectarian goals. And finally modernism, which permeates all the major religious bodies in America, viciously attacks the Bible by stripping it of its supernatural elements and reducing it to the level of mere human productions. Modernism is nothing more than infidelity in disguise! All of these groups—ranging from the Jewish rabbis of Christ's own day to the modern liberal theologians of our time—have claimed to be the friends of the Bible, but have actually been working toward its destruction. In spite of it all, the Bible is here!²¹

8. In the above quotation mention is made of **Modernism**. One of the blights of Modernism has to do with the

irresponsible handling of the Word of God by some textual critics who add to and take from the Scriptures when they ought to leave the text alone. God has issued very stern warnings against handling His Word in such a fashion (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). The work of destructive textual critics may be looked upon by some as “scholarship at work,” but in the eyes of God, these so-called scholars are nothing but modern-day Jehoiakims. If space permitted, much more could be said concerning how certain textual critics and translators are guilty of attempting to destroy the Bible. We will pause long enough however to provide a couple of excellent faith-building quotations which demonstrate that the Bible has even withstood the onslaught of its modernistic critics. Consider the following evidence:

Being written on material that perishes, having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press, did not diminish its style, correctness nor existence. The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined.²²

Additionally, Bernard Ramm notes that the Jews preserved the Biblical manuscripts as no others have ever been preserved. They were so involved that they kept track of every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. Ramm inquires, “Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?”²³ William Greenfield observes:

[T]hat the Jews have neither mutilated nor corrupted these writings is fully proved by the silence of the prophets as well as of Christ and his apostles, who, though they bring many heavy charges against them, never once accuse them of corrupting one of their sacred writings.²⁴

A further marvel concerning the preservation of Scripture is by whom the Sacred Writings were preserved. Adolph Saphir explains:

The Jews, who themselves rejected the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets testify, preserve the very books which prove their unbelief and convince the world of the divine authority and mission of Jesus. Where is there a nation preserving carefully a record which so repeatedly and emphatically declares that they are obstinate, ungrateful, and perverse; and which attributes all their victories and excellencies, not to their natural disposition and qualities, but exclusively to the mercy and power of God? Look again at the Church of Rome, preserving the writings of evangelists and apostles: that men forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats are the expected false teachers; ...that Peter savored the things that are of man {and was severely reprimanded by Paul}...The Jews bear unwilling witness to Jesus, and Rome has preserved and carefully transcribed her own condemnation.²⁵

In the late 1960's, A. Z. Conrad penned a poetic tribute to the indestructibility of the Bible:

Century follows century—There it stands.
Empires rise and fall and are forgotten—There it stands.
Dynasty follows dynasty—There it stands.
Kings are crowned and uncrowned—There it stands.
Despised and torn to pieces—There it stands.
Storms of hate swirl about it—There it stands.
Agnostics smile cynically—There it stands.
Profane punsters caricature it—There it stands.
Unbelief abandons it—There it stands.
Higher critics deny its inspiration—There it stands.
Thunderbolts of wrath smite it—There it stands.
An anvil that has broken a million hammers—
There it stands.

The flames are kindled about it—There it stands.
The arrows of hate are discharged against it—
There it stands.
Radicalism rants and raves against it—There it
stands.
Fogs of sophistry conceal it temporarily—There
it stands.
The tooth of time gnaws but makes no dent in
it—There it stands.
Infidels predict its abandonment—There it
stands.
Modernism tries to explain it away—There it
stands.²⁶

The Implications Of Its Indestructibility

The clearest implication of the Bible's indestructibility is that its author must be indestructible. Moncrief's little poem concisely expresses the thought:

The Book of God will stand secure
When sun and stars decline;
Its ageless truths will still endure
To prove its Source divine.

Melvin J. Wise gives a more extended explanation:

It is an indisputable fact that what man can produce man can destroy. Why, then, if the Bible is a mere product of mortal man, have nineteen centuries of assault upon the Bible been unable to destroy it? Down through the centuries enemy after enemy has come forth to war against God's Word. But this Holy Book has survived despite the frequent and continued attempts to destroy it. Again and again the most powerful governments in the world sought to eradicate it from the earth. Men have died on the gallows for reading it, and they have been burned at the stake for possessing it. If the Bible had been man's book it would have gone down in defeat and would have been forgotten centuries ago.²⁷

Another implication of the indestructibility of the Bible is that God's providence has seen the Bible through

thick and thin in order that we might have it today. W. J. Russell eloquently paints a picture of how God's providence has protected the Bible unto this very day:

The last book of the Bible was written nearly 1,300 years before the invention of printing. And when you think how those many centuries horde after horde of heathen barbarians swept like destroying blight over the lands where the Scriptures had a home; when you think of all the great libraries of the world, those for example at Alexandria and Constantinople, and Athens and Rome, were destroyed by fire; you see that it is a wonderful thing that the Bible has come to us in its integrity. How true are the words: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

...Nations have been born and have passed away since the Bible was written. New customs have come into existence and formed parts of the government of the world. Manners have changed, dynasties have crumbled, while the Bible alone, in spirit, has remained the same, fresh, true, and indestructible as its Author. Linguists have assailed its language—tested, tried, analyzed and weighed it in the balance, and yet not an iota of its truth has grown weaker, nor one ray of its light dimmer. Age has failed to affect its power. It has flourished, while its adversaries have been entombed one after another, and it never bade so fair as at present to be the Book of Truth, and the Most High has ever been its conservator and defense.²⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter we have investigated the indications and implications of the Bible's indestructibility. The Bible has withstood every possible attack and assault hurled in its direction. The Bible is much like the Irishman's fence. The Irishman had put the fence up many times only to see it vandalized and torn down. Finally, he decided to build a cement fence three feet high and four feet wide.

When he was asked by a friend as to why he built the fence with such odd dimensions, he replied, "I built it three feet high and four feet wide so it will be higher when it is turned over." As the late brother George DeHoff said, "Let the skeptics attack the blessed old Book. It will be higher when they finish."²⁹

One of the most eloquent poems describing the enduring nature of the Scriptures is attributed by some sources to Reuben Saillens, a denominational preacher from Paris, France:

Last eve I passed beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper's chime;
Then looking in I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon.
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone.³⁰

Let the skeptics scream and cry against the Bible. The more they pound and the more they shout, the more they wear their hammers out!

Endnotes

1 The word translated "being moved" in the ASV comes from the Greek word *pheromenoi*. The same word is used in Acts 27:17 to describe a ship being driven by a strong wind. Hence, the Biblical writers did not arbitrarily decide what direction they would go in their writings. Rather, they were driven by the Holy Spirit.

2 The word translated "tittle" in Luke 16:17 is the Greek word *keraiia*. Thayer's Greek Lexicon notes that the word literally means "a little horn; extremity, apex, point" and that it was used by Greek grammarians to refer to the accents and diacritical points. Jesus has reference to "the little lines or projections, by

which the Hebr. letters in other respects similar differ from each other” (Thayer 344). The meaning is that not even the minutest part of the law shall perish.

3 Though not blocked off in quotes, this illustration is not mine. I included it in a series of typed lessons I prepared on the inspiration of the Bible back in 1984. Unfortunately, I did not do a good job then of recording the source from whence the illustration came. Hence, I cannot remember whether I paraphrased the illustration or quoted it word for word. Be that as it may, I have tried in vain to locate the person originally responsible for the illustration. Whomever is responsible for it has well described the battles through which the Bible has come unscathed.

4 The mobility of the written Word demonstrates God’s great wisdom in communicating His will for humanity in permanent written form. Though God has at sundry times and in divers manners spoken unto man in other ways, in these last days He speaks to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). His Son speaks to us through the written Word which will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). God’s Divine economy is evidenced in giving a permanently written record of His will rather than having to reveal Himself to each individual in each generation. Furthermore, the written Word can circulate farther and wider than any one man as is evidenced by the writings of prisoners like Jeremiah and Paul. Paul himself wrote: “Wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9).

5 B. C. Goodpasture, **What The Bible Teaches: Being The 1972 Bible Lectureship Of Harding Graduate School Of Religion** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1972), p. 12.

6 These facts are quoted by Wendell Winkler in **The Case For Christianity: The Fifteenth Annual East Tennessee School Of Preaching And Missions Lectureship** (1989), p. 166.

7 Goodpasture, p. 13.

8 Bill Nicks, **Christian Evidences Vs. Modernism**, (Winona/Singapore/New Delhi: J. C. Choate, 1985), p. 133.

9 Winkler, p. 167.

10 Frank J. Dunn, **The Holy Scriptures: The Second Annual “Fort Worth” Lectures**, Ed. Wendell Winkler (Montgomery, AL: Winkler Publications, 1979), p. 49.

11 Nicks, p. 133.

12 Roy J. Hearn, “Inspiration Of The Bible: Part II—Its Indestructibility,” **The Knight Arnold News**, Volume II, No. 15 (April 9, 1985).

13 Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix, **A General Introduction To The Bible** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 124.

14 Dunn, p. 49.

15 Hearn.

16 Nicks, p. 134.

17 Quoted by Goodpasture, p. 13.

18 Quoted by Nicks, p. 134.

19 Hearn.

20 Quoted by Goodpasture, p. 13.

21 Believe it or not, this quotation is from the pen of Rubel Shelly, the Rubel Shelly of 1970, that is. The quotation comes from the book **Simple Studies In Christian Evidences**, p. 44. It heightens my sense of sadness to read such an excellent quote from brother Shelly only to realize that the Rubel Shelly of 2005 would never dare suggest that Protestantism has “perverted the Bible and corrupted its simplicity and twisted and warped it to suit their sectarian goals.” In fact, Rubel would be more likely to apply the above statement to churches of Christ than he would to denominationalism. In Rubel’s quote from 1970, he speaks of those who claim to be friends of the Bible but who are actually working toward its destruction. Who could have predicted then, that these words would be an accurate description of the Rubel Shelly of 2005? While he claims to be a friend of the Bible today, he is working toward its destruction by teaching doctrines that are clearly diametrically opposed to the truth of the Bible. Fortunately, we can say now what Rubel said then: “In spite of it all, the Bible is here.” As long as we have the Bible we can make it from earth to glory, even in the face of false teachers who, with smooth words and fair speech would deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18).

22 Josh McDowell, **Evidence That Demands A Verdict** (San Bernadino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1979), p. 19.

23 Bernard Ramm, **Protestant Christian Evidences** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), pp. 230-31.

24 Quoted by W. J. Russell, **New Testament Christianity**, Vol. II, Ed. Z. T. Sweeney, (Columbus, IN: New Testament Christianity Book Fund, 1926), p. 354.

25 Quoted by Rene Pache, **The Inspiration And Authority Of Scripture** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp. 291-92.

26 Quoted by Goodpasture, pp. 13-14.

27 Melvin J. Wise, **God: Abilene Christian College Annual Bible Lectures** (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1958), p. 126.

28 Russell, pp. 355-356.

29 George Dehoff, **Why We Believe The Bible** (Murfreesboro: Dehoff Publications, 1966), p. 118.

30 Stanley E. Anderson, **Our Dependable Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1960), p. 28.

CHAPTER 3

Because Of Fulfilled Prophecies

Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

ONCE AGAIN I AM thrilled with the opportunity to speak at the **POWER** Lectures and work with my son B. J.; to visit with my lovely daughter-in-law, Tish (who is much more than a daughter-in-law to our family!); and to see my three **Christian** grandchildren, Daniel, Holly, and Michael. This week is a treat in so many ways.

I cherish so much this excellent Southaven congregation, with her great elders, deacons, members, and preachers. The support of this congregation in my work with the **Bible Institute of Missouri**, a preacher training school in Springfield, Missouri, is especially appreciated. We graduated our first class of eight men this past May, and we pray that they are making a difference for good in the Lord's kingdom.

I could not be happier with my topic: it clearly claims that the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy gives one of the greatest reasons why we should believe that the Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). One lesson, oral or written, within the limits of this lectureship's guidelines, cannot fathom the depths of this tremendous subject. I do hope to provide some initial faith or to increase existing faith as we consider a small portion of the available material. **Endnotes will suggest a number of resources for further study.**¹

Prophets And Prophecy

Prophecy and the attributes of an omniscient (all-knowing) God go hand in hand. The common Old Testament (OT) word for prophet is *nabi*, which derives from an Akkadian verb meaning “to call or proclaim.”² Some spell the word *nabhi* and assign the meaning of spokesman or speaker, “an agent of another who has some special communication to deliver.”³ Both the Septuagint (Greek OT, also known as the LXX) and the New Testament Greek use the word *prophetes*, having the basic meaning of a “proclaimer.”⁴ The role of a prophet to God is illustrated in the relationship God established between Moses and Aaron:

And [Moses] shall speak unto [Aaron], and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God (Exod. 4:15-16; Exod. 7:1-2).

Prophets in the OT were also called “seers” (1 Sam. 9:9). This word likely applied to the method of receiving revelation from God by visions as well as “seeing” into the future by means of these revelations (Heb. 1:1; Ezek. 12:27; Ezek. 13:16). As we shall see, the true prophets of God were able to **fore**-tell things that had not yet occurred, as well as **forth**-tell what God revealed to them. Often, the prophets’ forth-telling involved fore-telling. At times, these events were in the immediate future, such as Christ fore-telling Peter’s three-time denial of Him that very night before the cock crowed twice (Mark 14:30; Mark 14:72). Other times, hundreds or thousands of years intervened, such as when God Himself prophesied after the Fall in Eden that the seed of woman would “bruise” the head of the serpent, Satan (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9). It was over 4,000

years before Christ came, but He did come and do what God said would happen (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14-15).

Man's Desire To Know The Future

There is within all people an ever-present desire to know what the future holds. In ancient societies and religions, they used a variety of means to **attempt** to ascertain the future:

The ancients developed many techniques of divination. In Assyria and Babylonia the *baru* ("seer") priests, an important caste of diviners, specialized in examining the entrails of sacrificial sheep (extispicy). They looked for a sign by "seeing" the position of the internal organs (liver, gall bladder, stomach, etc.). The *baru* were consulted by kings at court and generals on the battlefield. They wrote manuals and instructed novices in the art of divination. Other forms of divination include interpreting dreams, liquids, and fire; casting lots; shooting arrows; throwing sticks; mediums' consulting the dead (*necromancy*); using *teraphim*; watching the behavior of animals; and observing signs in the heavens (*astrology* or *astromancy*). Regardless of the technique, the diviner believed that the gods gave humans an omen. The diviner did not claim infallibility but offered probability. Therefore, he used a variety of omens and left the final decision to the one who had sought his advice.⁵

Of course, God had forbidden Israel to practice any of these means to attempt to discover the future (Deut. 18:10-14; Lev. 19:26; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6; Lev. 20:27; cf. Isa. 47:13). Sadly, Israel **did** resort to these means when they did not like the message God gave them through His prophets (cf. Isa. 6:9-12; Jer. 1:16-19).

Modern society is no less entranced by the desire to know what the future holds for them. Psychics, astrologists, New Age channelers, Tarot card readers,

seances with spiritualists, and Ouija board games are just a few of the present means used by people who seek to learn the future. Billions and billions of dollars are spent each year seeking to know things which cannot be known. Likely, there has never been a human being who has not at some time desired to peer into the future to know the outcome of something that person deems important. However, human beings, unaided, simply do not have the capacity to know or see the future. Additionally, the supposed aids described above and used in both ancient and modern times cannot live up to their claims to know and foretell the future. **Only the God of the Bible can do so.** Complete faith in Him relieves one's need to know the future beyond what He has revealed!

It is this drive within people to know the future, and our utter inability to know it, that make the fulfilled, predictive prophecy of the Bible such a powerful evidence that the Scriptures are inspired by an all-knowing God. One tremendous work on Biblical prophecy concludes that there are 1239 predictive prophecies in 6,641 verses in the OT, comprising 28.5% of that testament. For the NT, he calculates 578 predictions in 1711 verses, making up 21.5% of that division. He totals these to be 1817 predictions, taking up 8,352 verses of the 31,124 in the Bible, giving an overall figure of 27% of the whole Bible related to telling the future.⁶

One does not have to agree with every assignment of every verse which Payne denotes as predictive prophecy to be impressed that there must be a reason for God's giving us a book with so much of this type of literature. He is giving proof that He alone is able to provide information about the future and that we should be satisfied with the limited manner in which He has done this.

God's Ability To Tell The Future

God's claim to be God carries with it the concept of omniscience. The Bible itself, with all its predictive prophecies (and documented fulfillments in many cases), is a challenge to the character of people or literature claiming the same ability. The Lord defies all that seek to usurp His authority to engage in a contest:

Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and show us what will happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or **declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods:** yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together (Isa. 41:21-23; see also Isa. 42:9; Isa. 44:6-8; Isa. 46:9-10) (emp. mine throughout, TC).

Thus, God is willing to stake His claim to being **the only God** on His assertion that He is the sole Being Who can impart information about the future. He has controlled the imparting and release of that information through those He selected to be His prophets (Heb. 1:1).

God's Omniscience: He Knows All From The Beginning Of Time To The End Of Time

God is transcendent, meaning that, while He is a Creator involved in the well being of His creation, He is also above and over all things, "separate from and independent of nature and humanity."⁷ God is eternal, outside of the realm of time. He is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psm. 90:1-4). Since God is above time, which He created, He can look back in time and know perfectly what has happened, or look ahead to any point in future time and know with equal perfection what will happen.

This is why He is able to make the statements and issue the challenges quoted and referenced above from Isaiah.

As human beings, God has locked us into a flow of time. We only can know imperfectly the human history that is past, either as we have experienced it and remember it, or as it has been recorded by those who lived in those time periods. Of course, God's revealed Word as a record of the past is without flaw, since He has perfect knowledge of the past, present, and future. As mere humans, we have **no** insight into the future. We can make guesses, based on what we do know or believe has happened in the past, and by analyzing the forces at work in the present, but such predictions are not indicative of any ability to know the future as God knows it.

True Prophets And False Prophets

Hundreds and hundreds of times in Scripture, those to whom God had spoken identified that fact by statements like, "Thus saith the Lord," "the word of the Lord came unto me saying," and similar claims (Isa. 1:10; Isa. 37:21; Jer. 1:4; Hos. 4:1; et al.). As there are today, some among the ancient Hebrews wanted to claim a special relationship where the Lord spoke through them, when in fact He did not. For example, when God was ready to bring Babylon against Jerusalem to punish them, there were false prophets who said it would not happen as Jeremiah said. Hananiah, a false prophet, said, "Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years" (Jer. 28:11). Jeremiah exposed Hananiah, saying, "the Lord hath **not** sent thee," and that he would die that same year "because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord" (Jer. 28:15-17). Hananiah did die, and Nebuchadnezzar did destroy Jerusalem, verifying Jeremiah as God's true prophet.

The major criterion for legitimizing a prophet was that his prophecies came true as he gave them. Of Samuel it was said that God “did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” (1 Sam. 3:19-20). Moses wrote:

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath **not** spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deut. 18:20-22).

Not to be afraid of the prophet meant that one did not have to listen to what he said nor fear judgment from God if one ignored him, for he was not speaking from God. **A failed prophecy is a clear evidence of a false prophet** (cf. Jer. 28:7-17; Ezek. 13:6-9; Ezek. 30:30-33). False prophets were numerous in Israel, and God’s faithful exposed and opposed them, as Jeremiah did in fourteen of his fifty-four chapters (Jer. 2; Jer. 4-6; Jer. 8; Jer. 14; Jer. 18; Jer. 23; Jer. 26-29; Jer. 32).⁸

A second important test for distinguishing between true and false prophets was the attitude of the prophet toward God and His Word. Anyone seeking to turn Israel to other gods or away from God’s commandments was a false teacher (Deut. 13:1-5). To turn one away from God’s Word is to attempt to turn one away from God Himself (cf. Jer. 6:16; Isa. 8:20; Hos. 4:6; Luke 9:26; John 12:48-50). This would include all the words of God’s previous revelations to His prophets, for no prophet of God could contradict another true prophet (cf. Jer. 26:1-8; Jer. 26:17-19; Jer. 28:8-9; Zech. 1:3-6; Zech. 7:7).

Even though God is not continuing to give revelation today, these same tests are valid today to test those who claim to be prophets or spokesmen for God. Turn on your

radio or television, and you quickly can become disgusted by the repeated claims of hundreds who say, “God spoke to me,” and then tell you some pretended new revelation, or tell of some supposed future event God revealed to them! These are all men like those in Biblical times who “speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. 23:16). Such liars speak falsely, and whatever proceeds from their mouths is worthless according to God (cf. Jer. 14:14). Sadly, many today follow such false teachers for the same reason Israel did—they say what the people want to hear rather than what God has said (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Identifying True Prophecy

We have already noted that some teaching of the prophets is simply preaching God’s will on matters already revealed. The prophets revealed no new law, but called men back to the Law given by Moses (Isa. 1:10; Isa. 8:20; Jer. 7:9; cf. Exod. 20:1-17; Mal. 4:4). There was much prophecy of a predictive nature, but this was not like predicting the weather or stock market fluctuations. Predictive prophecy was not men using human reasoning powers given by God, but was possible only when men were receiving direct revelation from God regarding future events:

It is essential to an event of prophecy that it should be strictly future—that is, there should be no present means of inferring it. It must not be a possible deduction from any knowledge of the present facts. There must be that in the predicted outcome which cannot be traced to anything which we could know as now existing. This condition being met, should the event occur it becomes evident that it must have been communicated in some supernatural way, just in the degree in which it cannot be attributed to a happy accident.⁹

Another author gives six standards for an authentic predictive prophecy: (1) the prediction should occur well

in advance of its fulfillment; (2) the prediction should be accurate, conforming to the historical fact of its fulfillment; (3) the fulfillment must occur in an impartial manner, without evidence of manipulation or collusion; (4) the fulfillment should be obvious to reasonable assessment by a consideration of all the evidence, without bias; (5) the prophecy and fulfillment should be part of a repetitive and consistent body of such literature; and (6) the prediction should suggest supernatural guidance, being beyond matters of human reason or genius.¹⁰

When Biblical prophecies meet these criteria, there can be no other conclusion than that the Bible, in which these prophecies are found in abundance, can be nothing less than the inspired Word of God, and that God is a Being Who can indeed declare new things “before they spring forth” (Isa. 42:9).

Prophecies Against The Nations

Nearly every book in the OT gives some type of judgment prophecies against one or more cities or nations. Payne’s book gives a summary of these as including Ammon, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Egypt, Greece, Moab, Persia, Philistia, Phoenicia, Rome, and Syria (Damascus).¹¹ He lists separately those that pertain to judgments against Israel and Jerusalem.¹² All of the major writing prophets have sections in their books given to a presentation of God’s revelation to them of His coming judgments against the nations (see Isa. 13-23; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32; et al.).

One’s faith will be greatly fortified by searching out the specific fulfillment of these prophecies against the nations. Unfortunately, because of a presently misplaced emphasis by today’s false prophets on the prophecies of what will happen when Christ comes again, there has not been much writing in the area of fulfilled prophecy. Also unfortunate is that, while the knowledge of the prophecies

of what will happen when Christ returns is vital to each Christian, much of what is being offered as prophecy about these events is erroneous or misleading. For our test case regarding fulfilled prophecies against the nations, we will look at the prophecies in the OT against Tyre, particularly Ezekiel 26-28.

The City-State Of Tyre

Tyre was a Phoenician city-state with a part of its area on the Mediterranean coastline and an important part of its territory on an island one-half mile offshore from the mainland. Tyre was one of the oldest of Phoenician cities, by some estimates over 2,700 years old when Christ was born. Phoenicia was the home country of Jezebel, that wicked woman who married Ahab, king of Israel, who together led Israel into the idol worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:30-32).

The island portion of Tyre, sitting in the waters one-half mile off the coast of mainland Tyre, became a city of refuge when armies came against the mainland city. The island fortress walls were 150 feet high with battlements spaced around the top. Since Tyrians were the best sailors in the area, they were well able to defend themselves from aggressors from both their island fortress and from the sea. No one had been able to breach their island defenses and take the city, though both Assyria and Babylon had tried. Tyre had also established over 300 colony cities in various parts of the world. The greatest of these was likely the north African city of Carthage, which fought Rome and slowed her rise to world domination in the second century B. C.¹³:

Tyre had easily become the most celebrated of a cluster of Phoenician cities that clung to Palestine's Mediterranean coastline like pearls on a string. Her disinterest in empire-building enabled her to coexist alongside the great

empires of antiquity. The success of her merchants filled the coffers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia as well as her own. Left to her commercial endeavors, Tyre and Phoenicia created much wealth and no trouble for the great powers. Besides, the military prowess of the empires offered Phoenician traders protection and opportunities for unimpeded travel.¹⁴

Ezekiel 27 gives a Biblical description of the vast extent of trade and influence Tyre had in the known world. King Hiram of Tyre was a friend to Israel's Kings David and Solomon, providing materials, skilled craftsmen, and artisans (woodcutters, stone masons, metal workers, and engravers) to help build both the king's palace (2 Sam. 5:11) and the temple of the Lord's house (1 Kings 5-7; 2 Chron. 2:3-9).

The Prophecies Against Tyre

Ezekiel 26-28 foretell a devastating fate for Tyre. Ezekiel's prophecies are supplemented by a number of other statements against her (Isa. 23; Jer. 25:22; Jer. 27:3; Hos. 9:13; Joel 3:4).

While Tyre was not interested in "empire-building" as such, her constant reach for increasing wealth bred a nation of sins for which God decreed her downfall. Tyre's attitudes and actions made it a vivid example of the type of sins Paul described when he said that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10, ASV). One major condemnation leveled against Tyre was her selfish and mercenary reaction to Jerusalem's fall at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar (more often spelled Nebuchadnezzar). Tyre, seeing Jerusalem's fall at Babylon's hands, said, "I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste" (Ezek. 26:2):

Now that Judah is gone, there will be no one to levy toll on caravans from the interior bringing goods to the coast for export (Ezek. 26:2). The

pathos and tragedy of what has taken place so near her, the misery inflicted upon tens of thousands of human beings, the hopelessness of deportation and the shame of defeat—these touch no chord of sympathy. Profits will grow; that is all that matters to Tyre. Is there no parallel in our own day to such an attitude?¹⁵

Greed and love for money blind individuals and nations to their higher duties:

Tyre bartered and sold slaves in their markets. Slavery was profitable [cf. Joel 3:4-6]. Moreover, the Tyrian religion—worship of Melqart—encouraged a low view of human life. Children were wrenched from their parents and offered as sacrifices to their gods.¹⁶

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic (Ezek. 28:17).

Also, Tyre thought of herself as incomparable and invincible. The hearts of the prince of Tyre and the city were exalted above measure (Ezek. 28:2; Ezek. 28:17). God said, “Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God,” strangers will destroy your beauty, wisdom, and brightness (Ezek. 28:6-8).

Chapter 26 of Ezekiel describes the dismal future for Tyre. First, she would become “a spoil to the nations” (Ezek. 26:5-12). Second, “many nations [will] come up against thee” like sea waves (Ezek. 26:3-4). Third, Tyre’s destruction would be so complete that “they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water” (Ezek. 26:4-12). Fourth, the city would totally disappear, “mak[ing] her like the top of a rock. . .and thou shalt be no more” (Ezek. 26:14-21). Fifth, Tyre would never be rebuilt. Sixth, where Tyre once stood would become “a place to spread nets upon” (Ezek. 26:5-14). If these things happened as prophesied, there is no other answer than that Biblical prophecy is Divinely inspired.

The Destruction Of Tyre Fulfilled

Ezekiel dated his prophecies from the 598 B.C. date of Jehoiachin's captivity (cf. Ezek. 1:2; Ezek. 24:1; Ezek. 26:1; Ezek. 29:1; et al.). Therefore, we can know the date he received the revelation regarding the forthcoming destruction of Tyre.¹⁷ The eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity (and Ezekiel's) was 587 B.C. Within two years, Nebuchadrezzar began his siege against Tyre (Ezek. 26:7). History records that Babylonian forces battled against Tyre for thirteen years, destroying the mainland city but unable to capture the island fortress.¹⁸ The original mainland city was never rebuilt, but lay in ruins.¹⁹ Although devastated commercially by the long siege and forced to enter an alliance with Nebuchadrezzar, the island city of Tyre revived, and, a century later, she was again an important commercial trading and shipping center, now allied with the major world power of Persia.²⁰ Although Nebuchadrezzar's army fought hard against Tyre for all those years and did "a great service against Tyre" (Ezek. 29:17-19), he did not get the main prize of Tyre's wealth, which had been removed to the island city. Much of Ezekiel's prophecy remained unfulfilled, but the fact God had said, "I. . . will cause many nations to come up against thee," left open the possibility for the remaining elements of the prophecy to be fulfilled later (Ezek. 26:3). That is, in fact, precisely what happened.

Nearly 250 years later, the young conqueror Alexander the Great of Greece led his armies in defeat of Persia and started on a conquest toward Egypt. As he marched through Palestine, he quickly subjugated Sidon and other Phoenician cities. Tyre recognized Alexander's power and offered him a golden crown and other gifts, but, when Alexander wanted to enter the island city and offer sacrifices to the pagan god Melqart, supposedly a divine relative of his, the Tyrian leaders refused him and

his army entrance to the island Tyre. They reasoned that, since the world powers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia had not been able to destroy their island fortifications, they should not fear Greece.²¹ They murdered Alexander's messengers and enraged him.

In an unwitting fulfillment of the rest of Ezekiel's prophecy, Alexander had his soldiers take the ruins of the coastal city Tyre—the stones, timber, and dirt—and throw them into the sea (Ezek. 26:4-12), building a 200 foot wide road for the one-half-mile distance from the mainland to the island city. Due to storms, fierce Tyrian interference firing on the Grecian workers from the fortress and from ships, and divers sent to undermine the supports used on the roadway, it took two attempts and seven months to complete the work.²² Finally, the twenty-foot depths of the sea were filled for the half-mile with the ruins of old Tyre. So much material was needed, including all the dirt that could be found, that Tyre was scraped bare to the rock, exactly as God had prophesied. Alexander's war machines and army broke down the walls of the island Tyre, and the city fell. "Eight thousand [Tyrians] died. Two thousand were crucified. Thirty thousand more were sold into slavery. Much of the city was burnt and left in ruins"²³ (cf. Ezek. 28:18; Amos 1:9-10; Zech. 9:3-4).

Ezekiel had also prophesied that, where Tyre once stood, fishermen would spread their nets for drying (Ezek. 26:5). It is possible that this has been done since the destruction of old Tyre by Nebuchadrezzar. The port of Tyre, small as it is presently, is choked up to such a degree with sand and rubbish that the boats of those fishermen who now and then visit this once-renowned emporium and dry their nets upon its rocks and ruins can only with great difficulty be admitted.²⁴ [The "ruins" are from Roman times and later, after Tyre's total fall. See quotes 27 and 28 below.]

Another writes, "I went to visit one summer's day... Fishing nets were drying on the shore."²⁵ A third man tersely wrote, "Tyre has become a place to dry fish nets."²⁶ Another element of Ezekiel's prophecy is proven fulfilled. Lastly, what of Ezekiel's repeated statement?

thou shalt be built no more (Ezek. 26:14).

thou shalt be no more...thou shalt never be found (Ezek. 26:21);

thou...never shalt be any more (Ezek. 27:36).

Was there not a city named Tyre during the NT time of Christ (Matt. 11:21-22; Matt. 15:21)? Is there not a town in Lebanon today known as Tyre? If we admit there was such an NT city and a modern city called Tyre, do we falsify Ezekiel's prophecy? No, these later cities are insignificant to this prophecy:

Under Alexander, every vestige of a city on the mainland was hurled into the sea. The harbor disappeared under tons of debris. Alexander's efforts altered an entire landscape. Mainland Tyre no longer exists. The Greek strategy so completely blotted it from the earth that it is impossible to reconstruct its appearance. Hamilton explains, "Old Tyre today stands as it has for twenty-five centuries, a bare rock, uninhabited by man! Today anyone who wants to see the site...can have it pointed out to him along the shore, but there is not a ruin to mark the spot. It has been scraped clean and never been rebuilt." If th[is part of the] prophecy referred to Old Tyre, the fulfillment is obvious.

It is also possible that Ezekiel spoke of the island citadel. If so, that prophecy, too, was accurate. With Alexander's causeway, the character of the region unalterably changed. Tyre's defenses, centered on her island fortress, no longer exist. The ancient harbors, around which the city made her fortune, find themselves choked with sand and debris. The islands no

longer exist. Whatever might exist on the peninsula could bear no resemblance to the ancient Phoenician stronghold. The fishing village that currently sits on a portion of Alexander's peninsula possesses none of the characteristics of the city about which Ezekiel prophesied. No fortifications or walls surround it. No international markets thrive in its streets. No great temples rise from its land area. No exquisite artistry adorns its buildings. No riches pour into its coffers. In short, no one would consider it a "rebuilt replica" of ancient Tyre.²⁷

Truly, the Tyre about which Ezekiel wrote suffered all of the elements foretold in his prophecy. Nothing remains of either the ancient mainland or island sites of Tyre:

[T]he original city was never rebuilt...Today... only ancient Roman ruins and scattered ruins of even later civilizations lie in the vicinity of the old island city of Tyre off the coast of modern day Lebanon.²⁸

Even the most liberal scholars agree that the book of Ezekiel was completed by 400 B.C. As some have pointed out, considering the details of Ezekiel's prophecy, even if one ignores the date he gives for his prophecy, it would require Divine foreknowledge to know the details of Tyre's destruction, whether given 250 years or 70 years before her downfall.²⁹ However, Ezekiel's prophecies are the best attested of all the OT prophets, gaining almost unanimous consent to have been written in the sixth century [B. C.], just as he claims.³⁰

Surely, all of this is a clear demonstration that fulfilled prophecy is evidence that the Bible is inspired by the Almighty, all-knowing God.

Messianic Prophecy

The OT Hebrew word "Messiah" and the NT Greek word "Christ" both refer to the same person. Basically, the

word means “anointed one” and refers to the promise of God to redeem mankind through His specially chosen One, Who is identified in a variety of ways in both OT prophecies and NT designations. The OT prophecies of the coming Messiah and their fulfillment in the NT are numerous.

There are different ways that Bible students identify prophecies referring to the Messiah/Christ. Edersheim lists 456 prophecies, which, he says, the most ancient Jewish writings apply to the coming, person, and work of the Messiah. He documents this claim by quoting from 558 Rabbinical sources.³¹ Of these passages there are 75 in the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Writings (mostly historical and poetic books).³² Payne lists 127 predictions relating to the Christ, involving 3,348 verses.³³ Smith notes 131 Messianic prophecies given in the OT, along with the NT passages implying or specifying fulfillment.³⁴

Josephus identifies an attitude among the first-century Jews that looked for the coming of the Messiah. He says it was a misapplication by Jewish leaders of “an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, ‘about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.’”³⁵ Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius likewise comment that Messianic fervor was highest among the Jews in the early days of Christianity, before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, even though most Jews did not apply the Messianic prophecies to Jesus of Nazareth.³⁶ Interestingly, Smith notes that, even though there was a great expectation of the coming of the Messiah before Jesus came, there are no records of anyone claiming that title before the time of Jesus. Smith does list some 46 false Messiahs from the first to the nineteenth centuries.³⁷

In our time, men like Sun Myung Moon and David Koresh have claimed to be the Messiah. The Messianists

among the Chasidic Jews believe that Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died in 1992, will be raised to be the Messiah and usher in the Messianic age to redeem the Jews.³⁸ Messianic pretenders are like false prophets and false prophecies. They can be tested against what the Bible says, and can be exposed, opposed, and cast off as worthless. One can, by investigating the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, determine if He is indeed the Divine fulfillment of God's promise.

Prophecies Of The Messiah And Statistical Probabilities

How many or how few Messianic prophecies need to be applied with certainty to Jesus of Nazareth in order for Him to be considered the proven Messiah—456, 127, 131? Quite naturally we want to apply every prophecy to the one for whom it is Biblically intended, but how many such prophecies are needed to be fulfilled by Jesus in order for one to say, “There is something truly remarkable about how the events in this man’s life seem to be the fulfillment of what was prophesied about the Messiah to come”?

Nearly forty years ago, Peter Stoner, a science professor at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, did extensive research on the mathematical probabilities of various numbers of OT prophecies about the Messiah applying to Jesus of Nazareth. Twelve classes (600 students) worked with Professor Stoner in this effort.³⁹ This was no half-baked effort by radical, wild-eyed religionists.

The students carefully weighed all the factors, discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances which might indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement even among the

most skeptical students. But then Professor Stoner took their estimates and made them even more conservative. He also encouraged other skeptics or scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were more than fair. Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a Committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented.⁴⁰

What kind of numbers did this research group produce? The odds of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, according to Micah 5:2, was one in 2.8×10^5 , or one in 280,000.⁴¹ Yet Matthew 2:1-6 shows that the Jews understood this to be a Messianic prophecy and that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Do you suppose either Sun Myung Moon or David Koresh was born in Bethlehem? The odds of one man (Jesus or any man) fulfilling eight OT Messianic prophecies decreased tremendously. Stoner's group conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^{17} .⁴² That means one chance out of one with seventeen zeros after it (100,000,000,000,000,000).

To try to comprehend a number like that, Stoner used this illustration. Cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars. Choose and mark one silver dollar and drop it from an airplane flying somewhere over Texas. Thoroughly stir the silver dollars all over the state. Blindfold a person and let them travel anywhere in the state of Texas, stopping only once at a spot of his choice to dig into the two feet of silver dollars and pick out the marked one. The chance of a person being able to do that in one try is the same chance as one man fulfilling eight Messianic prophecies. Stoner concluded, "The fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10^{17} of being absolute."⁴³

If we were to make the number of Messianic prophecies 48 (still a small number of the prophecies Jesus actually fulfilled), the chances of one man fulfilling all 48 fall to an incredible one in 10^{157} (a one with one hundred and fifty-seven zeros after it).⁴⁴ That is a number so large that it is impossible to comprehend. John Ankerberg notes that a leading authority in probability theory, Emile Borel, author of **Probabilities And Life**, states that, once we go beyond one chance in 10^{50} (one with fifty zeros after it), the probabilities are so small that it is impossible to think they will ever occur.⁴⁵

A Stream Of Messianic Prophecies

In the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Zacharias prophesied:

the Lord God of Israel...hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began (Luke 1:67-70).

Jesus recognized that His ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and the events connected with the spread of the Gospel were all matters foretold by the prophets (Luke 18:31-33; Luke 24:44-49). The apostles showed an inspired recognition of the role of prophecy in that same plan of God (Acts 2:22-36; Acts 3:18-26).

The first Messianic prophecy in the first book of the Bible foretells Christ's first coming (Gen. 3:15). The final promise of His Second Coming is in the final Bible book (Rev. 22:20). The Biblical testimony concerning Jesus is the very spirit of all Biblical prophecy (Rev. 19:10). Read and study the following OT prophecies and their NT fulfillment. Space forbids commenting on them, but most presented are fairly self-explanatory, obvious fulfillments, possible only in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. (See chart on next page.)

BECAUSE OF FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Event	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Messiah's coming	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:16-20
Seed of Abraham	Gen. 12:1-3	Lk. 3:23-28; Gal. 3:8
Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14	Mt. 1:23; Lk. 1:31-34
Birthplace foretold	Mic. 5:2	Mt. 2:1, 6
Messiah's forerunner	Isa. 40:3-5	Mt. 3:3; Jn. 1:23
	Mal. 3:1	Mt. 11:10
	Mal. 4:5	Mt. 17:10-13
Ruler from Judah	Gen. 49:10	Mt. 1:2; Jn. 18:36-37
Prophet like Moses	Deut. 18:15, 18-19	Jn. 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22-26
Sit on David's throne	2 Sam. 7:12-13	Acts 2:29-32; 13:22f
	Ps. 89:3f, 20-36	
The rejected cornerstone	Ps. 118:22	Mt. 21:42
The parable teller	Ps. 78:1-2	Mt. 13:34-35
Hated without a cause	Ps. 69:4	Jn. 15:25
Zeal for God's house	Ps. 69:9	Jn. 2:17
Messiah's thirsting	Ps. 69:21	Mt. 27:34, 48; Jn. 19:28-29
Judas' betrayal	Ps. 69:25; 109:8	Acts 1:20
Christ's cry of abandonment	Ps. 22:1	Mt. 27:46
Pierced hands, feet, and side	Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10	Mt. 27:35; Jn. 19:37; 20:25
Sold his garment for clothing	Ps. 22:18	Lk. 23:34; Jn. 19:24
God's glorious Son	Ps. 2:7	Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
Victory over death, resurrection	Ps. 16:8-10	Acts 2:25-32; 13:35-37
Messiah's eternal nature	Ps. 102:25-27	Heb. 1:8-12
King and priest on throne	Ps. 110:1-4; Zech. 6:12-13	Mt. 22:44; 26:64; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13
Prince of peace	Isa. 9:6	Heb. 7:1-2, 21
Davidic shepherd	Ezek. 34:23-31	Jn. 10:1-30; Mt. 1:1
Messiah's everlasting kingdom	Dan. 7:13-14	Mt. 16:13-19; Acts 1:9; 2:29-36
Triumphal entry	Zech. 9:9-10; Ps. 118:23-26	Mt. 21:1-5, 9; Lk. 19:37-38
The smitten shepherd	Zech. 13:7	Mt. 26:31
Thirty pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12-13 Jer. 18:2; 32:6-9	Mt. 26:14-15; 27:3-10
Mocked by enemies	Ps. 22:7; 109:25	Mt. 27:29-30, 39-42
	Ps. 2:8	Mt. 27:43
Messiah beaten	Isa. 50:6	Mk. 14:65; Jn. 18:22; 19:3

Finally, consider what may be arguably the greatest Messianic chapter in Scripture—Isaiah 53. When Philip was asked by the Ethiopian eunuch, who was reading that OT chapter, to whom the prophet referred, Luke said that Philip “began at that same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:30-35). Consider the twenty-five elements of the prophecies in this chapter and their application to Jesus of Nazareth as their fulfillment. What follows is a slightly revised version of brother Wayne Jackson’s excellent chart on “The Amazing Prophecies of Isaiah 53.”⁴⁶ [The material in *italics* was added by this author.]

Isaiah 53	N T Fulfillment
1. Jewish unbelief (verse 1)	Jn. 12:37-38
2. Deity of Christ (v. 1)	Jn. 12:38-41
3. Lord's humankind growth (v. 2)	Lk. 2:52
4. Christ rejected (v. 3)	Mt. 21:42; 27:22
5. Man of sorrows (v. 3)	Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:35
6. Bore infirmities (v. 4)	Mt. 8:17
7. Smitten of God (v. 4)	Mt. 27:46; Gal. 3:13
8. Wounded, pierced (v. 5)	Mt. 27:35; cf. Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:24
9. Bruised (v. 5)	Mt. 27:30
10. Beaten (v. 5)	Mt. 27:26
11. Vicarious death, healed us (vv. 5-6)	1 Pet. 2:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:19
12. Passive non-resistance (v. 7)	Mt. 27:12, 31
13. In judgment taken away (v. 8, ASV)	Mk. 14:48-50, 55-56, 64-65
14. Cutoff from living (v. 8, ASV)	Acts 3:14-15, 26; Rom. 5:6, 8
15. Grave with wicked (v. 9)	Jn. 19:41
16. With rich man in death (v. 9)	Mt. 27:57-60; Mk. 15:42-46
17. Neither violent nor deceitful (v. 9)	1 Pet. 2:20-22
18. Put to grief (v. 10)	Lk. 19:41; Acts 3:18
19. Soul offering for sin (v. 10)	Mt. 20:28; cf. Lev. 6:6-7
20. Days prolonged (v. 10)	Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18
21. See His seed (v. 10)	Rom. 7:4
22. Jehovah satisfied (v. 11)	Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Cor. 15:14
23. Soul poured out (v. 12)	Mt. 26:28; Lk. 23:46
24. Numbered with transgressors (v. 12)	Lk. 22:37; 2 Cor. 5:21
25. Intercession for transgressors (v. 12)	Lk. 23:34; Heb. 7:25

As with the great details regarding the fulfillment of the destruction of Tyre, these twenty-five details fulfilled by Jesus cannot be the product of chance or manipulation. Every verse in the chapter has one or more elements fulfilled by Jesus. They prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that the Scriptures are inspired of God.

Could Jesus Have Engineered These Fulfillments?

Hugh Schonfield, in his book **The Passover Plot**, “proposes that Jesus was an innocent messianic pretender who connived to ‘fulfill’ prophecy in order to substantiate His claims.”⁴⁷ How could Christ be “innocent” if He was a fraud? Deception was totally absent from Christ’s character (1 Pet. 2:22; cf. John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21). Consider also that Jesus, as a mere human being, would have had no control over a great number of things prophesied about Him as Christ. He could not control being born of Judah in the Davidic line, being born in Bethlehem, being born of a virgin, His brutal treatment at the hands of the Jews and Romans, how He would die, soldiers’ gambling for His clothes, Judas’ betrayal, crucifixion with others, burial with the rich, and so on.⁴⁸

Prophecies Of Christ’s Resurrection

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the **gospel of God**, (Which he had **promised afore by his prophets** in the holy scriptures,) **Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord**, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; **And declared to be the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-6).

The apostle Paul stated in this quote that the Gospel, promised before by the prophets in the OT, concerned Jesus Christ our Lord and His resurrection from the dead. It was by His resurrection that He was **declared** (“to mark off by boundaries...to determine... marked out”⁴⁹) to be the Son of God, “**by the resurrection from the dead.**” Christ’s resurrection from the dead was a matter of OT prophecy.

In another epistle of Paul, he refers to Christ’s resurrection as follows:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

It has long been my observation that, while there are many OT references relating to these Gospel elements of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, Isaiah 53 is certainly one of the most significant, if not **the** most complete, of OT prophecies regarding these matters, because it covers all three elements in one prophecy. This is such a rich chapter that every Christian should memorize these prophecies relating to Christ’s suffering for us. While much of the chapter discusses His suffering, regarding His **death**, Isaiah 53:8 says, “he was cut off out of the land of the living,” and Isaiah 53:12 says, “he hath poured out his soul unto death.” Concerning His **burial**, Isaiah 53:9 states, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” His **resurrection** is implied in the promises that God the Father “would prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”

(Isa. 53:10) and the fact that God would “divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong” (Isa. 53:12). See again the chart on Isaiah 53 and the NT references that fulfill those 25 prophecies.

While there is no **direct** prophecy in the OT that states that Jesus would be raised on the “third day,” the Lord Himself stated, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40, NKJV). Jonah was a **prophetic type** of the Lord’s resurrection from the dead on the third day. By the mouth of our Lord, His resurrection was according to this Scripture in Jonah 1:17.

Another tremendous OT prophecy regarding the resurrection of Christ is Psalm 16:8-11:

I have set the LORD always before me; Because
He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not
leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your
Holy One to see corruption. You will show me
the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of
joy; At Your right hand are pleasures
forevermore (NKJV).

“Sheol” is the equivalent to the Greek word “Hades,” and refers to the realm of the unseen dead. Whomever this Psalm was referring to would not be left in the place of the dead.

In Acts 2, the apostle Peter shows that, while King David was the author of this Psalm, he is not the recipient of the promises made therein. The following is a lengthy quote from Scripture, but notice how this prophetic promise is related directly to Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of
Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by

miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. **For David says concerning Him:** “I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.” Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch **David**, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, **being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses** (Acts 2:22-32, NKJV).

These facts (i.e., those things taught by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) were included in the revelation made to Paul, and the truth which he proceeds to confirm by abundant additional testimony. That these facts were predicted in the Old Testament, is taught in John 20:9 and Acts 26:23. The passage especially urged by the apostles is Psalm 16:10. Peter proves that that Psalm cannot be understood as referring to David, because his body was allowed to see corruption. It must, he says, be understood as referring to Christ, Who was raised from the dead, and “saw no corruption” (Acts 13:34-37). **The prophetic Scriptures, however, are full of this**

doctrine; for on one hand they predict the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and on the other His universal and perpetual dominion. It is only on the assumption that He was to rise from the dead that these two classes of prediction can be reconciled.⁵⁰

Some Other Objections To Fulfilled Prophecy⁵¹

Objection: The language of prophecy is too vague to note definite fulfillment. **Answer:** While some prophecies are not as sharply detailed as others, a sufficient number, such as the prophecies on Tyre and from Isaiah 53, are definite enough to establish that Biblical prophecy can only come from an all-knowing God.

Objection: Other religions have holy books of prophecy, too, so it is of no value in proving the Christian faith. **Answer:** No other religion has “specific, repeated, and unfulfilling fulfillment of predictions many years in advance of contingent events over which the predictor had no control.”⁵² When one makes a comparison of such so-called prophecies of other religions with the Judeo-Christian prophecies of Scripture, the differences are obvious and significant. It is similar to comparing the claims of pretended miracle workers with those genuine miracles in God’s Word! Young’s study of extra-Biblical prophecy led him to conclude:

This survey of alleged prophecies from the ancient Near East has been somewhat brief and does not claim to be exhaustive. It will serve at least to give the reader an idea of the kind of “prophecy” which was produced in the world outside of Israel. The mere comparison of these “prophecies” with those of the Old Testament will at once make it evident that they were separated by a wide gulf. They were different from one another as day is from night. And the reason for this difference is to be found in the fact that in

Israel God spake through His servants the prophets.⁵³

Objection: Psychics and fortune-tellers make predictions like the Biblical prophets. **Answer:** Psychic predictions are **nothing** like the prophecies of Scripture. Remember that the Biblical test of a true prophet was that their prophecies came to pass as they gave them; not a word failed (Deut. 18:20-22; 1 Sam. 3:19-20):

A study of prophecies made by psychics in 1975 and observed until 1981 showed that, of the seventy-two predictions, only six were fulfilled in any way. Two of these were vague and two others were hardly surprising—the U. S. and Russia would remain world powers and there would be no world wars. **The People's Almanac** (1976) did a study of the predictions of twenty-five top psychics. The results: Of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong (Kole, 69). Accuracy rate around 8 percent could easily be explained by chance and general knowledge of circumstances. In 1993 the psychics missed every major unexpected news story, including Michael Jordan's retirement, the Midwest flooding, and the Israel-PLO peace treaty. Among their false prophecies were that the Queen of England would become a nun, and Kathy Lee Gifford would replace Jay Leno as host of **The Tonight Show** (**Charlotte Observer** 12/30/93).⁵⁴

Nostradamus (1503-1566) was a French physician and astrologer who is frequently touted for his prophetic ability, but he fares no better than the modern psychics. He published a book of rhymed prophecies called **Centuries** in 1555. He has a dedicated following today that often reads more into his prophecies than what he actually said:

Lamont claims that Nostradamus gave “a prophecy of the coming of Hitler and Nazism in

a world divided within itself” (Lamont, 252). However, Hitler is not mentioned and the prediction gives no date and is vague. It reads: “Followers of sects, great troubles are in store for the Messenger. A beast upon the theater prepares for the scenical play. The inventor of that wicked feat will be famous. By sects the world will be confused and divided” (ibid.). In this context there is a reference to “Hister” (not Hitler) by Nostradamus (C4Q68), which is obviously a place, not a person. The attempt to head back into both his [Hitler’s] name and birthplace is stretched. What is more, Hitler grew up in Linz, Austria, not in any place called Hister.⁵⁵

A further prophecy which Nostradamus’ followers claimed that he gave was that of a great earthquake for California on May 10, 1981. No such earthquake happened in California on that date. These are merely a few of the failed prophecies of Nostradamus, whereby he is proven to be a false prophet.

Objection: Only the successful prophecies of the Hebrew prophets were recorded. If all their prophecies had been recorded, they probably would not have done any better than the psychics or people like Nostradamus. **Answer:** This **assumes**, without producing evidence, that there were failed prophecies of the Biblical prophets. However, if that were the case, the people would have had no reason to let the prophets live, for the death penalty was decreed for those whose prophecies failed (Deut. 18:20-22). Also, this objection fails because there were many prophecies which were given hundreds or thousands of years before their fulfillment. How could someone know to remove a prophecy that had not been fulfilled, when it was still open to possible fulfillment? In many cases, if not most, the actual meaning of the prophecy was not known until it was fulfilled (cf. Luke 24:1-8; Luke 24:44-47; John 2:13-22; et al.).

Objection: Some Biblical prophecies have not been fulfilled as they were given. **Answer:** On the contrary, all Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled as they were given, but some were “conditional,” and others remain to be fulfilled. Deuteronomy 28-31 has a number of promises of blessings or curses, depending upon what Israel did or did not do (“if thou wilt,” or “if thou wilt not”). In other places, God uses the “if...then” phrasing. “If” you do this, “then” I will do this (cf. Gen. 18:26; Exod. 19:5; et al.). No one can find a Biblical prophecy that failed because God was in error about what would happen or because He was powerless to bring it to pass! Some prophecies are said to have failed because they are still unfulfilled, but, often, this is a misunderstanding of the prophecy by the one making the charge. Of course, prophecies of Christ’s second coming and the events of that last day still await fulfillment at the time God deems is right for it.

Conclusion

Critics from the first century did not believe in Christ’s Second Coming because it did not occur in the time frame they thought was proper (2 Pet. 3:1-4). There are those today, like Max King’s A.D. 70 theorists, who say putting off Christ’s Second Coming for 2,000 years or more has produced much disbelief of Biblical prophecy.⁵⁶ However, the first prophecy of Christ’s first coming (Gen. 3:15) was given in Eden some 4,000 years before God decided that the fullness of time had come (Gal. 4:4). Only half that amount of time has passed since the promises of Christ’s Second Coming (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10-11; Heb. 9:28; et al.). Jesus will come as prophesied, not as men have misinterpreted the event.

The apostle Peter reminded his readers about the earth’s destruction by the flood thousands of years earlier (2 Pet. 3:5-9), and that length of time is not a factor which

falsifies God's prophecies, unless God had given a time frame for those events. For some, God's patient longsuffering will mean salvation. "But," Peter says, "the day of the Lord will come [unexpectedly] as a thief in the night," just as Scripture has prophesied (2 Pet. 3:10-13). At that time, all the details surrounding this prophecy, including the resurrection of the dead and judgment of one's eternal destiny in heaven or hell, will come to pass as foretold (Matt. 24:35-25:46; John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

The prophecies we have studied regarding God's judgment upon the nations and the numerous predictions fulfilled by Jesus should be motivation for us to live by faith, a faith that God will surely accomplish those prophecies which remain:

Whatever else may fail, the word of his prophecy will never fail; but will to the end of time be proof absolute that he has delivered revelations to men on the earth. Its power will increase, not diminish. There are prophecies remaining to be fulfilled. Their time has not yet come...No prophecy is fully understood until its fulfillment. The fulfillment is the interpretation, and always clears it of obscurity...When the events come forth there will remain no vestige of uncertainty. Meanwhile the fulfilled guarantee the unfulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the word of God will fail! There is nothing more improbable in the unfulfilled prophecies than there was in the fulfilled; it is safe to say nothing half so incredible. With the history of the past behind us, our faith need not stagger at what remains for the future hastening toward us.⁵⁷

The records of Scripture and history combine to prove that the Bible is a supernatural volume given by inspiration from God. Proven, fulfilled prophecy puts the Bible in a category by itself. There is none like it! The Bible is the book wherein the Almighty and All-knowing God has

communicated His will to us and proved His existence and His Book's inspiration by foretelling and fulfilling the first and, someday, His final prophetic revelations to mankind. We should believe the Bible for many reasons, and fulfilled prophecy is certainly one of the major proofs that demands that we believe it to be from an Almighty, All-knowing God.

Endnotes

1 The bulk of this manuscript was previously delivered in the Third Annual Lubbock Lectureship (2000) directed/edited by Tommy Hicks, at the Southside Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. All Scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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3 Hobart E. Freeman, **An Introduction To The Old Testament Prophets** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 37.

4 Colin Brown, "Prophet," **The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology**, ed. Colin Brown, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 74-75.

5 Willem A. VanGemeren, **Interpreting The Prophetic Word** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Academie, 1990), p. 22. VanGemeren gives additional information on this interesting subject in his endnotes on this section, pp. 437-39.

6 J. Barton Payne, **Encyclopedia Of Biblical Prophecy** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973), pp. 674-75. Payne gives an amazing array of interesting statistics on prophecy in every book in the Bible.

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8 Verhoef, pp. 1076-77.

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10 Kenny Barfield, **The Prophet Motive: Examining The Reliability Of The Biblical Prophets** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1995), pp. 31-32.

11 Payne, pp. 660-64.

12 Ibid, pp. 631-59.

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19 Tikvah UtNapishtim, "Tyre—Legendary Phoenician City of Trade," http://www.ancientsites.com/~Tikvah_UtNapishtim/Tyre, p. 7; Alexander Keith, **Evidence Of The Truth Of The Christian Religion: Derived From The Literal Fulfilment Of Prophecy** (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1859), pp. 489-91.

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid, pp. 92-94.

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24 "Shaw's Travels," Vol. 2, p. 31. Quoted in Keith, p. 493.

25 Nina Nelson, **Your Guide To Lebanon** (London: Alvin Redman, 1965), p. 220. Quoted in Barfield, p. 96.

26 Hans-Wolf Rackl, **Archaeology Underwater** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 179. Quoted in Barfield, p. 96.

27 Barfield, pp. 95-96.

28 http://www.ancientsites.com/~Tikvah_UtNapishtim/Tyre, pp. 7, 10.

29 Norman L. Geisler & Ronald M. Brooks, **When Skeptics Ask** (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), p. 115. Barfield, has three chapters (pp. 243-80) dealing with the dating of the prophecies and the subsequent times of their fulfillments.

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32 Ibid, p. 980.

33 Payne, pp. 665-72, 682.

34 James E. Smith, **What the Bible Teaches About The Promised Messiah** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), pp. 491-501.

35 Flavius Josephus, "The Wars of the Jews," **The Works Of Josephus**, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 743.

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40 Ibid.

41 Peter Stoner, **Science Speaks: Scientific Proof Of The Accuracy Of Prophecy And The Bible** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), pp. 101-02. Be cautioned that not all of Stoner's book is accurate. In part of this book, he accepts the vast ages of the universe generally assigned by evolutionists or theistic evolutionists.

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46 Wayne Jackson, "The Amazing Prophecies Of Isaiah 53," **Christian Courier**, Vol. 16 (May 1980), pp. 3-4.

47 Josh McDowell, **The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), pp. 192-93.

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49 W. E. Vine et al., "An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words," **Vine's Complete Expository Of Old And New Testament Words** (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), p. 152.

50 Charles Hodge, **An Exposition Of The First Epistle To The Corinthians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 313-14.

51 What follows is, in part, a summary of objections and answers given by Norman L. Geisler, **Baker Encyclopedia Of Christian Apologetics** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), pp. 614-16.

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53 Edward J. Young, **My Servants The Prophets** (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 193-205.

54 Geisler, p. 615.

55 Ibid, "Nostradamus," p. 549.

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57 Foster, pp. 164-65.

CHAPTER 4

Because It Is Inerrant

Curtis Cates

Introduction

NO MORE TIMELY AND vital theme could have been selected for The 13th Annual Power Lectureship than “Why **Should** I Believe the Bible?” God bless brother B. J. Clarke and the great Southaven church!

The very foundation of Christianity is the fact that Jesus Christ is the “only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16). But what assurance exists that He is Deity, except that the Holy Scriptures are proven to be infallible? The Bible was written **by** human beings **for** human beings. Man’s very hope rests upon the question, “Could the Scriptures be the inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God, though penned by men?” Whereas many people in our generation are saying “No,” this work will affirm the answer to be “Yes”!

Biblical Faith Is Based On Evidence

Since faith is based upon the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), the faithful have no reticence to an objective examination of the issue. Jehovah urged the people:

Come now and let us reason together (Isa. 1:18).

Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong reasons (Isa. 41:21).

Christians are commanded to “give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in

you” (1 Pet. 3:15). Christianity is a life described by Paul as “belonging to the reason” (Rom. 12:1, ASV margin), from *logikos* (logic). So, like Samuel before Israel, the Lord would have us make a reasoned, logical response to the evidence: “Now therefore stand still, that I may plead [reason] with you before the Lord” (1 Sam. 12:7; cf. Luke 12:57; Acts 18:4; Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 2:2-5).

Inerrancy Severs One From Modern “Scholarship”

Immediately upon one’s taking his stand with inerrancy, he calls forth strong, incessant criticism upon his head; he is branded as a radical literalist, a bleary-eyed, ignorant, irrational fundamentalist, and a Biblicist. Such a person holds that the Bible **is** the genuine, verbally inspired, plenary Word of God— not that the Bible merely **contains** the Word of God, nor that the Bible under certain circumstances and in certain places **becomes** the Word of God as it helps a certain person overcome a crisis or live the “authentic” existence.

The very idea that one can **know** the truth and that **absolute truth** even exists is being assailed by “higher criticism” today. [Imagine man pompously setting himself up as a “higher” **critic** of the Bible, whereas the Bible is the discernor, or critic, of man (Heb. 4:12)!] In other words, primitive Christianity is under embittered attack by the modernists of this generation. This is the great watershed, the great gulf between God’s Word and modern liberalism—inerrancy.

Modernism Rejects Supernaturalism

The Scriptures’ infallibility necessitates the existence of an omnipotent, non-contingent, omnibenevolent Creator, Who has all authority and exercises that authority over man through His Divine revelation. Christianity is a revealed religion. Though the Lord has spoken as one

having authority, most of His offspring have refused to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:18ff).

Christianity is by necessity a supernatural religion; it reveals and describes the Creator of the universe, Who miraculously and extraordinarily intervened in the history of the world to bring about the scheme of redemption, to confirm the Word, and to accomplish His purpose in the world. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-8), their close and intimate relationship with the Creator was broken; they were separated by their transgression from God (Isa. 59:1-2).

Far from being uninterested in man, His offspring (Acts 17:25-29; Heb. 12:9; Gen. 1:26-27), God began immediately to move toward Calvary and man's redemption through the God-man, Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15). The movement of history was inexorably toward the death upon the cross of the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Thereby, and only thereby, could/can man's sin be forgiven and man be redeemed/reconciled to God (Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Heb. 10:5-10; 1 John 2:1-3). That, dear reader, is the story of the Bible.

Whereas many have abandoned the revelation of God's Word and have tried to answer the fundamental and critically important questions of life—Where did I originate? What is my purpose here? Where am I going?—by human philosophy, or reasoning (which always ends in vain speculation and vain imagination), and/or by science or nature (which always ends in perversion—Rom 1:18-28), one can learn the truth regarding these eternal verities only from the inerrant Word. Man apart from revelation of God is perverted, and perverted thought always ends up in perverted religion (whether it involves atheism, agnosticism, world religions, Catholicism, denominationalism, theological liberalism,

doctrinal heresy, or anti-ism). When man rejects all or any part of God's revelation (be it large or small) and seeks by his own wisdom to search out God and how man may please Him, it is folly: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23; cf. Rom. 10:1-3).

Every false religion, or perversion, results from man's seeking after God apart from Divine inspiration, the Scriptures. However, the story and purpose of the Word is God's seeking man. Only in this way does man receive true wisdom (see Job 28). After Adam and Eve sinned, God was seeking them (Gen. 3:8-10); they were hiding. Who sought whom at the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-6)? Moses hid his face. Why did Christ come to earth? "For the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Whatever the excuse for rejecting Divine revelation, man does it at the cost of his eternal soul!

The Problem

What Is Inerrancy?

The word "errant" is from the Latin infinitive *errare*, meaning "to wander"; the prefix "in" negates the word it precedes. Thus, it affirms that the Scriptures adhere to the truth, rather than departing or straying from it (John 17:17; John 8:32). It does not err in its revelation, its assertions relative to doctrine, ethics, history, et al. The autographs were absolutely and totally free from error. The Bible gives a faultless record of everything with which it deals (including lies and faults, at times); it chronicles the record of those errors but does not sanction them. It does claim infallibility in all that it does teach, however. Further, when accurately transmitted/translated, the translation is also the inspired Word of God.

Do Not Human Beings Err?

The modernist affirms that, though the Bible claims to be inspired of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21), yet men did the writing. Anyone knows, they reason, that human beings err; they make mistakes. Instead of being God's Word telling us about man, it is man's word about God. Thus, is it not somewhat drastic, dreamy, and extreme to think that man could write the Bible totally free from error? But to object thus is to reject that the Bible is God's Word, making the Scriptures wholly and purely human. Inasmuch as the human writers wrote **only** what they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, the Scriptures are both the Word of God and of man—not a contradiction but inerrant, plenary, verbal inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21). If human beings err all the time and in all circumstances, does not this necessitate that Christ (God in the flesh) erred? Such reasoning undermines and destroys the incarnation and the very possibility of man's redemption from sin (John 1:14; Heb. 2:6-18).

If The Bible Is In Error In One Or More Points, Can It Be Trusted In Other Points?

Biblical Christianity (which is the only genuine article, though it has been counterfeited) has its very foundation in Holy Writ. If the Word can be proven to err, Christianity collapses like a house of cards. How different are the faithful children of God in the Scriptures from many who profess Christianity today! The faithful strictly adhered to the authority, inerrancy, and reliability of the Word, whereas many in this generation hold it to be full of contradiction, fables, and myth. Who can prove that we possess Divine guidance today if the Bible is not God's Word, since the prophets, the apostles, and Christ are no longer speaking directly to man?

When one attempts to discern how all know what we know in Christianity (epistemology), what **objective**

evidence do we call forth? If the Bible is not the actual Word of God, we have none! Not only is Christianity a way of life (ethically, morally, spiritually), it depends upon and affirms the supernatural. “There is a God in Heaven” (Dan. 2:28), in Whom we all live, “move, and have our being” (Acts 17:24-28)—the eternal Creator. Jesus Christ, also God, took on flesh, died, arose from the dead, and ascended back to heaven, where He now reigns (Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 1:4; Eph. 4:8-11). The Holy Spirit, also God, revealed the Word of Truth (John 16:13; John 14:26). The blood of the resurrected Savior cleanses us from sin (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28; Rev. 1:5), and our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), which is the eternal destiny awaiting and prepared for the faithful (John 14:1-6).

The situation is this—remove the inerrant, supernatural Book, and there is absolutely no substance to the claims of Christianity; it is but another world religion without portfolio, without credentials! Reject inerrancy, and man continues his futile attempt to answer the critically important questions of the ages: where did I originate, what is my purpose in life, and what is my destiny? He is stripped and deprived of one of man’s greatest, innate needs—hope.

Modernists Have Non-Biblical Views Of Revelation

Until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Bible was generally held to be reliable and valid on any subject discussed. With the advent of so-called “science” and secularism, the Bible has experienced assault after assault from its critics, including many who **claim** to be “theologians.” What was held to be the actual, recorded Word of God is now widely viewed as a purely human concoction of myths, fables, speculation, and guesswork. The countless contradictions and errors (alleged by the critics) simply cannot allow the Bible, they

affirm, to stand up under close and critical examination—thus “proving” the Word not to be inerrant.

Several different views of revelation exist today by modernists. First, there is existentialism (neo-orthodoxy, crisis theology), which affirms revelation to be a confrontation, encounter, or personal address. God (whoever or whatever that is) always reveals “Himself” directly today, not through Scriptures. This dynamic or conversion experience, they say, takes place at the time of this confrontation. The Bible is not historically accurate, nor does it need to be; it simply contains myths not only about historical events but also about the works of Christ (including the miraculous). One can see something about the “theology” of the early church in the Bible, but it is not a Divine revelation, they affirm.

Second, numerous events recorded in the Word are held not to have taken place actually and historically as therein recorded. This view says, for example, that neither the miracles surrounding the Exodus from Egypt nor those making possible the literal, bodily Resurrection of Christ from the grave on the third day literally took place. The Bible, they aver, only records what the Israelites and the early church **believed** about those events.

One needs to keep in mind that modernists are guilty of double-talk—that is, they will often use such words as revelation, inspiration, resurrection, miracle, and salvation, but, at the same time, give them their own definition of those words (which is different from the meaning given in the Scriptures).

Some Affirm We Are To Follow Christ, Not The Bible

Often, liberals teach that, since Christ is the One Who is the Saviour, the Bible does not save. Since the Bible does not save the sinner, then it matters not whether the Word is inerrant. No such errors or contradictions as are

found in the Scriptures can mitigate against the redemptive power of Christ. Such does not depend on an inerrant Bible, they say. They often emphasize evangelism (and the social gospel), warning that those who spend much time defending the inerrancy of the Word virtually render Christianity ineffective in carrying out this mission. To them, a book is not important; their claim is that their faith has Christ as its basis, not some writing.

It is readily transparent, though, that the Christ of redemption is the Christ of the Bible; no faith is possible without the Word (Rom. 10:17). Also, the liberal rejects the words of Jesus, the authority of Jesus, the doctrine of Christ, the miracles of Christ, and the church of Christ. To reject Him is to deny and fight against Him! In addition, how does one exalt the Christ of truth (John 14:6), while at the same time holding Christ to be mistaken in His affirmation of the inerrancy of the Scriptures? How could one prove Christ not to have been mistaken on any other teaching, even including the offer of salvation?

Bible Inspiration

God has chosen to reveal evidences of His existence to man in two ways or stages. He has universally given mankind “from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness,” a witness to His existence (Acts 14:17): “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psm. 19:1). However, some refuse to admit, “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4). The evidence in the natural realm is abundant that God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1). But the evidence from the physical creation alone is not enough to save one’s soul. There is need of further evidence, His instruction in the inerrant Word, revealed supernaturally through inspired writers.

The Psalmist was able to address the Lord as “O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer” only because “The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul, The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple” (Psm. 19:7). One can see the glory of the Creator in physical creation, but one would never by it learn of the persons in the Godhood, the scheme of human redemption, or the will of God by which we are sanctified. This is the truth by which we can be made free from sin (John 8:32; John 17:17), the very Word of God.

Bible Inspiration Is Not Symbolic

Inspiration is often held to be merely symbolic. Since the language of human beings is always relative, they say, then there are no absolutes; there is no absolute truth. Since Christ is that Truth, then we are always seeking and never arriving. To claim to have Truth is to attempt, according to them, to justify ourselves by works. We would ask, “Do they know absolutely that there are no absolutes?” Additionally, such subjectivism and relativism lead inexorably and of necessity to darkness, hopelessness, despondency, skepticism, and irrationalism. Still again, if Truth is only symbolic, does Christ, the Son of God, really exist? They hold even Christ’s resurrection to be mere symbol. Dear reader, what guarantee is that—that your loved ones and you will arise at the last day? Absolutely none!

The Scripture Does Not Become The Word Of God

In “higher criticism” the affirmation is often made that certain portions of the Bible can “become” the Word, i.e., become “inspired.” Some have sought to distinguish the inspired Word from Scripture, based upon whether that portion meets the particular person’s subjective longings and needs at a given time. Though words are

inadequate fully to express thoughts, they say, and though those words in the Scriptures are often false, God can still use them to try to get something else across. God is far above language; therefore, He cannot express His ideas through language. (Enter Rubel Shelly's "God-talk.") The test is whether it inspires one to surmount his problems and to allay his needs and fears. They reject the foretelling nature of Bible prophecy and miracles as well as Bible doctrine, which they say was but an attempt to find truth.

The Bible is truly God's inerrant, objective, propositional Word. His revelation is not "wordless," which is pure mysticism; rather, it is understandable by both God and man, and by it knowledge is exchanged. Salvation without knowledge is impossible (John 6:44-45; John 8:32). To charge the Almighty with inability to communicate effectively with His offspring is ludicrous folly! Note the following clear affirmations:

Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh (Gen. 18:15).

Question: Did Sarah understand what Jehovah said? Did He understand her denial? "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

Some Advocate Partial Inerrancy

Some modernists hold that the Scriptures are inerrant, and even plenary in God's purpose for them, while, at the same time, being historically, scientifically, and otherwise inaccurate and full of error. God's **intent** is

honorable and honest, though the **means** of conveying His purpose is not. In other words, Scripture should be judged only by what thoughts and meaning the authors intended to convey—not by the falsehoods, myths, legends, et al. that it contains.

Such makes God untruthful. God, being the One Who inspired the Word, placed all in the Scriptures that is found therein, and He did so with purpose; that is why it is there. Since God **cannot** lie, the Word is trustworthy. If God intended to say what His Word does not say, where is the proof?

Further, let the one defending this erroneous position explain the affirmation of Christ, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). By no stretch of the imagination is Christ saying that Man is to live only by the **intent** of the Word, rather than **every word!** That is nonsense! Either the Bible is infallible, and is thus the Word of God; or it is fallible, and is thus the concoction of mere man. Now, which is it? Our Lord affirmed the whole of God’s Word (authored by God and written by inspired human beings) to be inerrant, valid, reliable; to reject that is to reject Christ as Deity! The Bible **is** the Word of God; it does not **become** the Word. It is God’s Word because it was God’s Word from the time of its revelation.

Adherence To Scripture Is Ridiculed

Many, even in the Lord’s church, speak of being emancipated from “book, chapter, and verse, proof-text preaching,” and an adherence to the Word. This is nothing new for modernists. This is derided as “Biblicism.” The accusation is often made that we worship and deify the Word. New Testament Christians worship God, but we respect, love, and revere the Word as sacred, the very voice of Deity! (Interestingly, the modernists and liberals use

“proof texts” when they think it suits their false and devious purpose.) Do not be deceived; abandonment of God’s absolute Truth, of necessity and inevitably, leads to utter darkness, doubt, and uncertainty. Man will turn his back on the inerrant Word to the destruction of his own precious, immortal soul. How tragic!

We Affirm That The Bible Is Verbally Inspired

The Holy Spirit worked through the writers of the Bible to give us God’s very Word, free from mixture with anything human, the Truth and nothing false, the revelation of God and not the speculations, legends, philosophies, traditions, and theologies of men. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, cannot lie! The Word is infallible—wholly and completely free from errors or contradictions—notwithstanding the railings, sarcasm, and mockery to the contrary.

When the word “inerrancy” is used, certain things are **not** implied, however. **First**, not everything is revealed about certain persons, events, places, et al., which are discussed in the Word. For example, what is revealed about God, the creation, angels, etc., is without error, yet the Bible does not exhaustively discuss every detail of these themes and topics. The Bible does not bow to every curiosity of man; it reveals what we need to know, consistent with God’s purpose.

Second, not always did even the Bible writers understand fully what they were recording, yet it was without error.

Third, verbal, infallible inspiration relates to the original autographs (2 Pet. 1:21). Through God’s providence, the Word has been preserved in its copying and transmission. The reliably transmitted and translated Word is likewise verbally inspired.

Fourth, the fact that the Word teaches the inerrancy of the Scriptures (as shall be proved) means that the Word of God limits man's approval before God only to his acceptance (and his acting upon that acceptance) of the fact of the Word's inerrancy (Heb. 11:6; John 12:48). Thus, no person who ascribes historical, scientific, or doctrinal error to the writers of the Word or to the Word itself is approved by Jehovah; one who accuses the Bible of containing contradictions, partial inspiration, or being pseudepigrapha is anathema (Gal. 1:8-9): "God forbid; yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

To deny and dishonor the Scriptures is idolatry; it is to obey words of humanity. It is tantamount to making to be "truth" the words of men, not the words of God—a form of Humanism. It is equal to idolizing the philosophy and tradition of man.

"The Scripture Cannot Be Broken"

The Lord Himself affirmed the indestructibility of His Word, the Bible, in this way in John 10:35. Every word of it was declared by Christ to be trustworthy. To the Bible believer, the simple affirmation "It is written" is the end of the discussion; that is Bible authority. That settles the matter! That is the way it was in the **first century**, and that is the way it is **today**. Even a tyro is able to see that principle. Why can the Scriptures not be broken?

All Scripture Is Of Divine Origin

Paul recorded:

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is God-breathed. That is what qualifies it as profitable! They are the greatest and most profound

writings ever penned because they are sacred, proceeding from the Divine. “Every sacred writing” (*pasa graphe theopneustos*), every mark, every word is breathed by God. Peter’s testimony is the same:

And we have a word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Peter was assuring his readers that the abundant entrance into heaven, “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and His majesty were not founded upon the “cunningly devised fables” of men but rather upon the very Word of God. **We have the Word.** The two above passages confirm we have the Scripture, the whole of Scripture, in every part and in its totality of parts; the reason is that it “was brought” (ASV margin) by the Holy Spirit, not from or by the will of man. Holy men accomplished exactly and precisely God’s goal and spoke exactly and precisely God’s words, for they “spoke from Him.”

The Scriptures Challenge Man To Investigate

The Bible seeks exhaustive, painstaking, close, objective scrutiny. The challenge is, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18): “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). It is reasonable [the Greek *logikos* (logical)] to be a Christian (Rom. 12:1), and thus, the Christian is commanded to be “ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). The Bible has **nothing** to fear from investigation; our Lord challenged, “Search the scriptures” (John 5:39).

Luke, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote of the Bereans that they searched (*anakrino*) the Scriptures, a word meaning to divide, to pulverize, to sift the Word, as one would grind substances in a mortar. How akin this is to the Lord's command "Search" (John 5:39), using the word *ereunao*, a term having to do with the sport of hunting! It means to "trace out" or "track out," as a dog would a rabbit. Would you, dear reader, like to name another book which courts such close, meticulous, thorough, and critical investigation?

No book has ever been scrutinized so closely or vigorously, and, I might say, viciously. The microscope and the telescope of man have been applied to "the Book of books," but, the closer the investigation and the more detailed the study, the more beautiful its fabric. The productions of men undergo but a mere fraction of a fraction of such investigation; they are examined, rifled through, and somewhat rigorously tested at the mercy of mankind; and such results in their complete exhaustion and abandonment. Man moves onto other thoughts, other pursuits, and other works. Now, why does the Bible multiply in its beauty and complexity (as a snowflake or a butterfly wing under a microscope) as its innermost thoughts, precepts, and principles are dissected and scrutinized? That, my friend, is the difference between the meager and fallible works of finite man and the inexhaustible and vibrant revelation of the infinite Creator! "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul" (Psm. 19:7).

Additional Evidences Of Inerrancy

The Word of God warns against man's adding to or taking from the Scriptures (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). This fact alone proves the Bible to be God's document, His Word—inerrant. The mere authority,

opinions, theologies, traditions of men are not in the Bible, nor are they to be confused with authoritative Scripture, nor are they to be added! His Word is God's "witness" against man (Deut. 31:26); it is "to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Imagine the "higher **critics**" putting God's Word on trial! Nonetheless, the Word "abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:25)!

The Old Testament Testifies Of Its Inerrancy

Jehovah Himself said to one of His spokesmen, Moses:

Thou shalt speak all that I command thee (Exod. 7:2).

And God spake all these words, saying (Exod. 20:1).

Now these are the ordinances which thou shalt set before them (Exod. 21:1).

Hundreds of times throughout Exodus, it is recorded, "Thus saith Jehovah."

Turning to Leviticus, one reads repeatedly:

And Jehovah said unto Moses, and spake (Lev. 1:1).

And Jehovah spake (Lev. 4:1, et al.)

Who spoke? God. Who listened, heeded, and recorded? Moses (Exod. 32:16; 2 Chron. 34:21).

God spoke through the Old Testament prophets (Heb. 1:1). How did Ezekiel speak (and write) to Judah? "And he [God] said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with **my words** unto them" (Ezek. 3:4, emp. mine throughout, CC). How did Jeremiah speak and write? "[W]hatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak...Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put **my**

words in thou mouth” (Jer. 1:7; Jer. 1:9). But Judah did not “hearken unto the words of Jehovah, which he spake by [literally, “by the hand of”] the prophet Jeremiah” (Jer. 37:2). These references could be greatly multiplied.

Christ Testifies Of Its Inerrancy

The Jews ascribed legal authority to the Law of Moses, as did Christ (John 10:34-35; John 12:34; John 15:25; cf. Psm. 35:19). The fact of the Scriptures’ inability to be broken was the very ground on which the Lord proved His point; it could not be annulled, which is tantamount to and necessitates inerrancy. He who rejects inerrancy rejects Christ; one cannot have it both ways. Why did the Lord submit to the Scriptures? They were His Father’s Word (Matt. 4:4; Heb. 10:9). How did Christ say it? Every word issued forth from God’s mouth!

Why does Christ often say that He “must” do what He does? For example, “For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he **must** rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). Oh, how this world would be revolutionized if everyone, including the “theologians,” had such a high regard for God’s inerrant Word as did His only begotten Son!

Notice further Christ’s inspired and Divine endorsement of the Scriptures. Not one jot or tittle of the Old Testament would fail to be accomplished (Matt. 5:18); in fact, “And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27). He also affirmed the inspiration and inerrancy of the New Testament before it was revealed/ recorded:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come (John 16:13; cf. John 14:26).

Note His powerful affirmation in the questions “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” Man must read and be guided by **only** what is written in the Divine, Sacred Book! To deny inerrancy is absolutely to deny Christ’s Deity and Divine authority.

The Apostles Testify Of Its Inerrancy

The apostles would be delegated certain authority by Jesus Christ, Who was given all authority (Matt. 28:18); they would judge the Lord’s church (Matt. 19:28; cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Matt. 18:18; John 20:21-23; Luke 22:28-30). Thus, their words were authoritative. Paul urged, “So then, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistles of ours” (2 Thess. 2:15). He taught the same Word in all the churches (1 Cor. 4:17-18; 1 Cor. 14:33-34; 2 Cor. 11:28). The words written by Paul were/are the very words of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13). He had the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16); Christ “speaketh in me,” he affirmed (2 Cor. 13:3; cf. Rom. 16:25-27). Peter commanded, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11); the oracles are the Holy Scriptures (Heb. 5:12). As Moses “received living oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38), so likewise did the apostles. Jude wrote that we should “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Many Characteristics Of The Scriptures Add Their Testimony Of Its Inerrancy

Abbreviated only because of space limitations, numerous additional evidences are cited. First, the Word is living; to the person who is dying, this is supremely important (Phil. 2:16; 1 John 1:1; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23; et al.). Second, the Word is perennially fresh; it does not become obsolete. Its storehouses are never exhausted, and

man **never** outgrows it (Rom. 1:16-17). Third, the Word discerns the hearts of human beings; we learn our own thoughts (Heb. 4:12).

Fourth, the Word is completely, persistently indestructible; it lives on, though it is the most hated book in the world, which hatred proves its claims (Matt. 24:35). Its enemies die; the Word lives on! Fifth, the Word is scientifically accurate; its accounts of creation, the Genesis flood, et al. are the only valid, scientific explanations of what one sees about him and the only explanations which are congruent with the **facts** of science.

Conclusion

The Bible is as seamless as the garment worn by the only begotten Son of God; the unity for which Christ prayed can come only when mankind respects the inerrancy of that book. Only when the Bible is acknowledged as **God's Word** will we be delivered from traditions, philosophies, and opinions of men. Though God does not speak directly to us today, nonetheless, He speaks to us on a personal, truthful, authoritative, loving basis through His Word, as He did to the greats of Bible history. I personally can think His thoughts and live the promised abundant life. I can be in fellowship with my loving Savior and with the Father, for I have been forgiven through His grace.

However, if the Scriptures are not inerrant, then the Scripture is broken. What good is it to search the Scriptures? Eternal life is not in them; we are of all men most to be pitied! And, we go as the modernists, crying out in desperation, "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" Woe be to us if we accept the latter and reject the former; all life would be vanity for our poor wretched souls. Rather, let us all objectively examine the evidence. Let all Christians contend for the inerrant Word!

CHAPTER 5

Because Of The Sky Above: The Bible and Astronomy

Michael McDaniel

Introduction

IN THIS AGE OF skepticism, we desperately need this lectureship on “Why **Should** I Believe The Bible?” I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the eldership at Southaven and to my friend B. J. Clarke for the invitation to speak on this timely theme.

Without question, many deny the scientific accuracy of the Bible, especially as it pertains to the field of astronomy. Nevertheless, my research in this field has proven to be faith-building rather than faith-destroying. From February 2004 until March 2005, I studied and taught the book of Job in my Wednesday night auditorium class. Except for the beginning and ending chapters of the book, we would normally cover a chapter a night. As we reached its crescendo, God’s address to Job, we were captivated by the knowledge of God exhibited in these verses, which confirms the mind-boggling intelligence of our Creator and the indisputable inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Bible is rich in content relating to the topic of astronomy: “The word ‘astronomy’ derives from two roots—

astron, ‘star’ and *nomos*, ‘law.’ This word suggests an arrangement or distribution of the stars. This, in itself, implies a lawgiver or an arranger.”¹

Several years ago, the atheist Carl Sagan had a television series on PBS called **Cosmos**. The word “cosmos” is an Anglicized form of the Greek word *kosmos*. This word originally referred to order or arrangement. From Sagan’s point of view of the universe, he should have labeled it “Chaos” instead of “Cosmos.” A super explosion like the supposed “Big Bang” would have produced chaos. Explosions create disorder, not order. When we look into the sky above, we see order that originated from God.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” The faith in Christ by which we are saved and by which we live is, first of all, faith in the creation. This verse eliminates the possibility of evolution being “God’s method of creation,” as many would like to believe. If that were the case, “the things which are seen” would have been made of preexisting materials or things which **do appear!** However, the truth is that the things which are seen were **not** made of things which do appear! God created the worlds out of nothing. He did it by the power of His word. The Father was the Divine architect, Christ was the builder (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17), and the Holy Spirit oversaw the work and gave it order!

Word-power framed the worlds:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water (2 Pet. 3:5).

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;
and all the host of them by the breath of his
mouth (Psm. 33:6).

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

God spoke the things into existence! He then **framed** them (Heb. 11:3). The word “framed” can mean “to order.” God created matter. He then ordered it into the beautiful cosmos that we see.

Yet, many remain skeptical of the Bible’s affirmation of the creation of God and cast doubt on the integrity of the Bible.

The Skeptics Around Us Who Positively Hound Us

Those who do not believe the Bible claim that it is filled with blunders which do not correspond to the scientific facts of astronomy. They commonly refer to the following three examples. First, they cite Genesis 1:6, where God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Skeptics argue that this passage suggests a firm vault in the heavens that held back the waters. Notice the following:

One may ask whether or not the word [inerrancy, MM] applies to matters involving **every** statement in the Bible on cosmology, botany, and the other sciences. For example, when the Bible describes a “firmament” that separates the waters above from the waters below one may wonder if the Bible intends to make an accurate scientific statement. [In a text box is this sentence: “To ancient peoples, the firmament was a domed expanse of heavens dividing the upper and lower waters.”—MM]²

It may be surprising for some to learn that these statements come from a book published by the Abilene Christian University Press entitled **God’s Holy Fire** and written by three professors on its faculty. It is tragic that

a book so filled with modernism and skepticism would be published and sold among our brethren. They seek to redefine inspiration so that they may “shift the focus of the discussion from the scientific accuracy of the Bible in all of its details to its total sufficiency for what God intends it to do.”³ To them the skeptics would say, “Welcome aboard!” Their book destroys faith and promotes doubt rather than promoting faith and destroying doubt.

The word “firmament” would be better translated “expanse.” However, God gave the true definition of the word when He “called the firmament Heaven” (Gen. 1:8). It was above the atmospheric heavens that a water vapor canopy possibly extended before the flood, shielding the earth from much of the radiation it now receives, and perhaps also accounting for the length of years of those who lived before the flood. Friends, if the Bible is not accurate concerning matters of **science**, then how do we know that it is accurate concerning matters of **salvation**?

Some skeptics refer to Revelation 7:1: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.” Skeptics charge that the phrase “four corners of the earth” reflects the idea that the earth is flat (cf. Isa. 40:22). The truth is that this is simply a figure of speech suggesting that the angels overshadow the whole world:

Some time back the U.S. Marine Corps published a brochure affirming that this branch of the military has men “serving the flag at the four corners of the earth.” Does anyone suggest that our government does not know the shape of the earth? ⁴

Another charge of the skeptics is that the Bible teaches the false idea of geocentricity (i.e., the sun revolves

around the earth). For years, Bible critics scoffed at the teaching of Psalm 19:5-6. Referring to the sun, it says:

Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

However, just because the sun is said to be moving does not imply geocentricity.⁵ In June of 1999, astronomers focused on a star at the center of the Milky Way and measured for the first time how long it takes the sun to circle the Milky Way galaxy. Their answer was 226 million years. It is thought to be moving through space at the rate of 600,000 miles per hour.⁶ Therefore, the sun is not stationary, as was once thought. How did the Psalmist know about the circuit or orbit of the sun? The obvious answer is that the Holy Spirit chose words for David consistent with true principles of scientific astronomy. Incredibly, some who profess to believe the Bible agree with geocentricity! In the last few years, you may have received a couple of books on this subject which were sent to 9,763 congregations of churches of Christ and to others. However, the truth is that neither the sun nor the earth is stationary in the sky.⁷

Other religious books contain fanciful theories of the sky above that were prevalent in the times they were written. For example, the *Vedas*, which are the Hindus' revered writings, teach:

the moon is approximately 150,000 miles higher than the sun and shines with its own light,...the earth is flat and triangular, and...earthquakes are caused by elephants shaking themselves under it!⁸

Yet, these writings claim to be inspired of God. Skeptics have legitimate cause to be skeptical of the *Vedas*, but no

cause to be skeptical of the inspired Word of God. Wayne Jackson wrote:

We are confident, as a result of careful and sustained study, that whenever the Bible touches upon a subject, it is accurate—if its language is truly understood. If God is the Author of nature, and if He is the Source of the Scriptures, the two will be in harmony, for He is not a deity of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).⁹

The Sky Above Us Points To A God Who Loves Us

One footprint on the sand convinced Robinson Crusoe that another human being was on the island he inhabited. How many “footprints” in the sky above will some skeptics need to find before they are convinced that we are not alone, that there is a God Who loves man?

A God Of Supernatural Power

In Isaiah 40:25-26, we read:

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is **strong in power**; not one faileth (emp. mine in Scripture references throughout, MM).

Isaiah said that there comes a time in the life of man when he needs to lift up his eyes to the stars and see behind them the face of their Creator and realize that He is strong in power.

The Psalmist said:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;
and all the host of them by the breath of his
mouth...He gathereth the waters of the sea

together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psm. 33:6; Psm. 33:8-9).

We can look at the heavens and know that they were created by the breath of the mouth of the Lord, by the power of the very Word of God.

Hebrews 3:3-4 states:

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

From this statement we obtain what is called the cosmological argument for the existence of God. Someone created the cosmos. We see the effect; therefore, there must be a cause. That is the law of cause and effect. An adequate cause is demanded for every effect. For example, when we see a house, we know that house did not just rise up out of the ground. We know that some man built it.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was one of the great defenders of skepticism. On March 6, 1927, he delivered a lecture entitled, "Why I Am Not a Christian." In that lecture he said, "If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause."¹⁰ However, in objecting to the argument, he did not state it correctly. Every effect must have a cause. However, **God is not an effect**. Nothing caused God. He is eternal, and He is the cause for this universe! Only an omnipotent being has the power to create this universe.

Dr. Arthur M. Harding, professor of mathematics and astronomy at the University of Arkansas, described our solar system by saying, "Surely here is a gigantic machine which makes us stand in awe and wonder at the power of

the Creator who could design such a machine and put it into operation.”¹¹ Similarly, in a beautiful tribute to God, Isaiah wrote:

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? (Isa. 40:12).

Consider the infinite. Do you ever look up at the stars and see the physical proof of endlessness? Space seems to reach out beyond the comprehension of our finite minds. You look up and you can see infinity, or, at least, the idea of it. Does this not make us consider the fact of the existence of God, Who is infinite in His characteristics?

Consider the number of the stars:

Scientists have estimated that even without a telescope you can see 5,000 stars, five or six planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and sometimes Uranus), and the moon. There are billions of galaxies in the Universe and hundreds of billions of stars in those galaxies.¹²

In Genesis 15:5-6, God took Abram outside and said:

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

With the giving of the Abrahamic promise, God asked Abraham to go out and look at the stars. God used the stars to illustrate to Abraham the number of his descendants. His descendants would be as innumerable as the stars. While many have tried to do so, no one can even begin to give an accurate estimate of the number of stars. Jeremiah 33:22 says, “As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so

will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.” How did Jeremiah know this? The same God Who created the universe inspired the Bible.

A God Of Superior Perfection

An understanding of the perfection of the heavens reveals the wisdom and understanding of God. Merlin Grant Smith was president of Roberts Wesleyan College and professor of mathematics, physics, and astronomy. He wrote:

All nature functions according to fixed laws. New laws are being discovered right along. There are the subatomic laws, and the laws governing the interdependence of extra-galactic heavenly bodies. To discover them has required the combined efforts of many very scholarly men. But we are simply **discovering** those laws. They are as ancient as the universe itself. Shall we accept the theory that they are of material origin? The multitude of them, the harmony of them, the very nature of them, make that completely impossible. These laws are of higher origin than the universe in which they operate. There is, to my ordinary, common-sense mind, but one plausible answer, and that is that these laws demand belief in a Lawgiver, which I again call God.¹³

Johann Kepler (1571-1630) was a great astronomer who made many discoveries. He once said that in his discoveries he was merely “thinking God’s thoughts after Him.”¹⁴

The Psalmist said in Psalm 136:5-9:

To him that **by wisdom** made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The Psalmist tells us to look at the wisdom displayed by God in the heavens above. He made the sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night (Gen. 1:14-19). We know from Genesis 1:3-5 that light, day, and night were created on day one of creation week. On day four, the celestial bodies were positioned and set to rule from henceforth.

God in His power did everything just right so that the earth would be the perfect environment for humanity. Where else in the billions of galaxies all around us is there another planet of suitable size, placed at a suitable distance from its sun, inclined exactly at the proper angle upon the plane of its orbit, possessing exactly the precise kind of satellite it needed, the moon, with the proper atmosphere, and with the varying duration of light and darkness in the course of the year producing the seasons?

The more we discover the complexities of this arrangement, the more able we are to appreciate God's design for us and His wisdom in the creation. Famed astronomer Robert Jastrow said:

Thus, according to the physicist and the astronomer, it appears that the Universe was constructed within very narrow limits, in such a way that man could dwell in it. This result is called the anthropic principle. It is the most theistic result ever to come out of science, in my view.¹⁵

Job 26:7 says that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing." While the record of Job's words is inspired, Job's speeches were not. Yet Job could have gotten the idea of a suspended earth by looking at the sun, moon, and stars. Today, we know about Newton's law of universal gravitation. Every object in the universe has an attraction

or gravitational pull on every other object in the universe, and the amount of pull is directly proportional to the density (weight per unit volume) of the two objects and inversely proportional to the distance between the two objects. While we may not understand everything about that, what is important is that God does!

Suspended in the formless void of space without support, the earth is rigidly maintained in its orbit by a mysterious force we call gravity, but which could just as rationally be called nothing, or perhaps better, the will of God.¹⁶

In Job 38:33, God asked Job, “Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?” The word “ordinances” means laws. God’s heavenly bodies are operated by His finely-tuned celestial laws which were created by His wisdom. Consider the nature of an eclipse. A lunar eclipse occurs when the earth’s shadow is cast upon the moon; a solar eclipse is observed when the moon’s image is seen upon the sun. Henry Morris wrote:

It is remarkable that the sun’s diameter is about four hundred times that of the moon and its distance from the earth is also four hundred times that of the moon. This means that the moon is just exactly large enough to precisely cover the sun’s disc, from the point of view of an observer on the earth, at the time of a total eclipse of the sun. The exact reason why God designed it this way is not yet evident, but the relationship is too precise to be accidental.¹⁷

On the island of Jamaica, some uncooperative natives threatened Christopher Columbus. Columbus told them that, “should they persist in their enmity, the moon would lose its light.” He knew from the astronomic calendar of Regiomontanus that a total eclipse of the moon was due to occur on February 29, 1504. He used this knowledge of astronomy to control the Jamaican natives. The fulfillment

of this prediction caused them to release him and allow him to go home.¹⁸

We know that stars have been used for navigation, for getting one's bearings on long journeys. They are used to set the time, to determine latitude and longitude, to establish directions and locations anywhere on earth for navigation and other uses that require extreme precision. They can be used to direct us where we want to go.

In July of 1969, the U.S. government decided to send some men to the moon. How could they aim a spaceship to land on the moon, since this heavenly body is a moving target? The moon moves in an orbit around the earth at the speed of about 2000 miles per hour. In the three days it would take the spacecraft to travel from the earth to the moon, the moon would have moved a distance of more than 165,000 miles. The astronomers would have to know precisely where the moon would be three days after the launch. This could only be accomplished under the presumption that the laws of nature are stable and uniform.¹⁹ If we lived in a lawless universe, space travel would be impossible, to say nothing of conditions on earth. God's perfection is seen in the laws of nature. As Proverbs 3:19 says, "The Lord by **wisdom** hath founded the earth; by **understanding** hath he established the heavens."

A God Of Superior Purpose

Why did God create the sun, moon, and stars? Genesis 1:14-15 says they were for signs, seasons, days and years. The earth's rotation in relation to the sun produces day and night and provides our seasons. The revolution of the earth in its orbit around the sun each 365 days measures the year. And for centuries, the stars have served as signs for ancient mariners to navigate the oceans of the world (cf. Acts 27:20).

At times, God has used them to teach spiritual lessons. Stars reflect the keeping of the all-important Abrahamic promise (Gen. 15:1-6). A star reflected the coming of Christ (Matt. 2:1-2). The stars were used to reflect the tragedy of false teachers (Jude 13). The stars reflect our resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:40-44). The stars reflect the blessedness of the soul winner (Dan. 12:2-3).

A controversy of recent note centered on a book written by Presbyterian preacher, D. James Kennedy, on the gospel in the stars. This view maintains that, in the signs of the Zodiac, is found a prophecy of Christ and redemption. Such teaching is not new. Some say it was first formulated by Miss Frances Rolleston, a nineteenth-century English linguist, in her book, **Mazzaroth—The Constellations**, published in 1863. It was further taught by E. W. Bullinger in his book, **Witness of the Stars**, in 1893.²⁰ The idea is that there was a God-given Gospel in the stars which has been corrupted by astrology. Even Henry Morris teaches it and has a chart on the possible message of the zodiac signs on page 164 of his revised book, **The Biblical Basis Of Modern Science**.

An entire manuscript could be produced on this subject. This writer has seen no one in the church address this issue. Suffice it to say that this writer believes there is nothing to it. There is nothing in the Bible to affirm it. In addition, how the constellations appear to man is totally subjective. In fact, the Chinese interpret their constellation charts with different characters than ours.

It is certainly not God's purpose for us to worship the stars of heaven rather than the God of heaven. God warned in Deuteronomy 4:19:

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven,
and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and
the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest
be driven to worship them, and serve them,

which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

In our corrupt society, we have those who faithfully read their horoscopes each morning instead of their Bibles. Astrology emphasizes the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25), and such is idolatry. The notion that the stars alter the events of our lives is nothing but a hand-me-down from the ancient idolatry of Egypt and other nations. Satan uses this to entice people away from God.

The attitude God has asked His people to take toward everything connected with superstition, astrology, and the occult has remained consistent through the ages. He has warned against everything associated with them. Jeremiah warned in Jeremiah 10:2: "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain." We must remember that the stars were made to serve us instead of us serving them! They were not made to determine our destiny, but to declare the glory of God.

Herein lies God's superb purpose. Psalm 19:1-4 says:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

As the heavens declare the glory of God, they are declaring the existence of God. The Psalmist would have us remember that the message of the heavens to man is constantly ongoing; it never ceases. The clouds, sky, and sun do it by day, and the moon and stars do it by night. They speak a message universally available to all (Rom. 1:20; Rom. 10:18). They reveal a God of power, perfection, and purpose.

In the afterword to Robert Jastrow's book, **God And The Astronomers**, NASA astronomer John O'Keefe wrote:

To the astronomer, the earth is a very sheltered and protected place. There is a marvelous picture from Apollo 8 of the blue and cloud-wrapped earth, seen just at the horizon of the black, cratered, torn and smashed lunar landscape. The contrast would not be lost on any creature; the thought "God loves those people" cannot be resisted...We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures...If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision, we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in.²¹

When you look at the beautiful Earth compared to the other planets in our solar system, is it not obvious that we are a cherished and loved people?

"Behind The Scene"

by Charles Brewer

Behind the world there is a dream.
Behind, a wise design I see:
A Heavenly plan, a holy scheme
For all that is, or e'er shall be.

It is God's world, he made it fair;
The evening sky, the earth, the sea,
The sun, moon, stars, He put them there—
Without His power they could not be.

What is the purpose guiding through?
Oh! Who has the power the whole to see?
The world by wisdom never knew,
But faith reveals the mystery:

For Wisdom, back of Power, directs;
Through Wisdom, Mercy guides;
A Father's Heart plans and protects
And over all his Love abides.

And Love is centered all in you,
In you and me and all mankind;
That truth above all else is true—
The secret of His whole design.²²

Isaiah 40:26 says:

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath
created these things, that bringeth out their host
by number: he calleth them all by names by the
greatness of his might, for that he is strong in
power; not one faileth.

If God, Who loves His children as a devoted Father, looks
after each inanimate heavenly body without fail, will He
not care for His sons and daughters? At times, we may
feel that God has forgotten us and that He does not care.
However, we should lift up our eyes and see beyond the
stars to a God of infinite power, wisdom, glory, and love
Who cares and does not forget us!

Countless suns are ever circling
Through the boundless realms of space,
And the God whose hand has made them
Keeps each orb in its true place.
All revolve in perfect order,
Harmony complete we see,
Yet the God whose will they follow,
Is the God who thinks of me.²³

The God Who made the stars knows their names, and He
knows your name. We must rely on Him!

The Scriptures Beside Us Point To A God Who Guides Us

Years ago, brother Hugo McCord said it well when
he wrote:

One of the most convincing proofs of the
superhuman origin of the Bible is its accurate
forecasting of coming historic events hundreds

of years ahead. In a similar way, the Bible showed a knowledge of some scientific data hundreds of years before scientists had discovered them. The Bible was not written in order to anticipate science. Its purpose was and is much higher. But if its source is actually superhuman, one is not surprised if the Bible not only failed to endorse scientific errors, but also showed superhuman knowledge of true science.²⁴

Within the Bible's pages, we find some remarkable anticipations of modern discoveries, most of which were made by great scientists of the past who believed in God and creation like Newton, Maury, Faraday, and Morse. Just in God's science examination of Job, there are at least seventy-seven questions, many of which are legitimate concerns of scientific research and some of which have been partially explained. Not only can God's book guide His creatures from earth to heaven, but it can also provide some guidance in the understanding of the things which God has created.

Scientific Foreknowledge Of The Shining Light

Job 38:19-20 states:

Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?

Light is said to travel in a way. The Hebrew word (*derek*) means a traveled path or road. However, darkness is said to be a place. The Hebrew word for place (*maqom*) means a place, a spot, as standing. Until the 17th century, it was believed that light was transmitted instantaneously. Then, Sir Isaac Newton suggested that light was composed of small particles traveling in a straight line. Scientists now know that light travels in electromagnetic waves at the

speed of 186,000 miles per second, or about 660 million miles an hour, in a straight line. It takes about eight minutes for light to travel its path from the sun to the earth. Scientists even use the speed of light to measure distances in our vast universe. When light stops traveling, there is darkness. Darkness stays in place, just as the Bible said!²⁵

Job 38:24 says, “By what way is the light parted.” The word “parted” is from a Hebrew word which means to divide. Though the Lord may be simply asking Job if he knows how light is distributed on the earth, it is also an amazing scientific fact that light can be literally parted. When a narrow beam of sunlight passes at a slant into a triangular transparent prism, the sunlight is broken up into a band of seven colored lights called the spectrum (red to violet). Sir Isaac Newton was the first scientist who demonstrated this, but God’s prism, the rainbow, had been revealing this fact since the time following the flood.²⁶

Scientific Foreknowledge Of The Sun

Psalms 19:6 says of the sun, “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” How did the psalmist know about this “circuit” or orbit? Was this just a guess? No, the psalmist knew it by inspiration. The psalmist continues by saying, “There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” No form of earthly life could exist without the sun:

In three days from the extinction of the sun there would, in all probability, not be a vestige of animal or vegetable life on the globe...The first forty-eight hours would suffice to precipitate every atom of moisture from the air in deluges of rain and piles of snow, and from that moment would set in a universal frost such as Siberia or the highest peak of the Himalayas never felt—a temperature of between two and three hundred degrees below zero.²⁷

Fortunately for us, the sun is a self-regulating furnace and, like the burning bush, it burns and burns but is not consumed.

Scientific Foreknowledge Of The Silvery Moon

Job 38:33 says, “Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?” How would the moon exercise dominion over the earth? Science tells us that the gravitational pull of the moon on the earth causes the tides of the ocean.

But what about that romantic light of the silvery moon by which many men have proposed marriage? Kenny Barfield notes that whereas the Hebrew word *hammah* or “hot one” is used for the sun (Isa. 30:26), Bible writers refer to the moon as *lebhenah* or the “cool one.”²⁸ While many of the ancients falsely assumed that the moon provided its own light, we now know that it simply reflects the light of the sun to that portion of the earth which has turned away at night from the direct light of the sun.²⁹

Scientific Foreknowledge Of The Stars

In 1 Corinthians 15:40-44, Paul wrote:

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Paul speaks of the heavenly bodies and how they differ in glory or brightness. This is a scientific fact, and many of the efforts of astronomers are devoted to studying and

cataloging the different types of stars. They are given a magnitude rating to indicate their degree of brightness. The lower the number, the brighter the star. One gazing into the heavens can see a different brightness in appearance among the sun, moon, and stars. God the Creator has made all, giving each thing its own form and appearance.³⁰

Job 38:31-32 says, “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?” Job may be the oldest-written Bible book, yet it names these constellations of stars great distances apart but which appear in various pictures to man. Pleiades is a part of the Bull, a large constellation in the Zodiac. It is on the end of one of what is supposed to be the Bull’s horns. It is a famous group of what appears to be at least seven stars which appears in the spring. It is called the seven sisters, but it is actually a cluster of many stars. The New King James Version says, “Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades?” Some photographs reveal more than two hundred stars in this cluster. Now, what is interesting is that this cluster of stars is bound together in a group and moving through space, just as God said.³¹

The constellation Orion becomes visible in late October and announces the coming of winter. Orion is the large constellation of a hunter with a raised club, a shield and a sword dangling from his belt. The belt is the most striking part with three bright stars in a straight row. No other constellation has so many bright stars.³² It is one of the greatest of all constellations and appears as a group of stars to the naked eye. However, they are actually vast distances apart and are really unassociated or loosed. So the Lord may have been asking, “Job, can you ‘unbind’ Orion?” If so, then there is astronomical information

suggested here that far predates what we have been able to find through the modern telescope. The best time for seeing Orion is December through March.³³

The Mazzaroth, believed to be the twelve signs of the Zodiac, are those that dominate the Southern skies.³⁴ The word “Zodiac” is Greek for animal circle. Yet some of the twelve, like the twins and the scales, are not animals. The Zodiac is a belt formed by twelve constellations girdling the sky. Sun, moon, and planets always travel within this belt. Along the middle of the Zodiac runs the ecliptic, the apparent path of the sun among the stars through the year.³⁵

Arcturus, or the great bear, dominates the Northern skies. The Greek word for bear is *arktos*, from which comes the word “arctic,” literally bearish. It stands for the Northern parts of the earth where the great bear appears even more dominantly than in our latitudes.³⁶ The great bear is the constellation in which is the Big Dipper. The Big Dipper is probably the best-known group of stars. It helps us to find Polaris, the pole star, or, as we often call it, the North Star. The two stars at the end of the cup in the Big Dipper point to it in a straight line. Polaris is the most important star in our skies. It always remains on the same spot while all the other stars circle around it.³⁷ The pole star is part of the constellation called Ursa Minor or the little bear. With the bear are his cubs, but to us this constellation resembles a Little Dipper more than a cub.³⁸ The great bear, of which the Big Dipper is a part, can be seen all year long in the Northern hemisphere, but the best time is February through June. Thus, the entire expanse of the starry skies are brought into view, the skies of Spring and Winter and of the North and South.

Now when God asks Job if he can guide Arcturus, this writer is not certain if this is what is meant or not, but observe the following. Did you know that God has given

us a clock in the night sky? This is something that is called the umbrella planetarium.³⁹ Imagine the pole star as the center of the umbrella and yourself at the handle. On opposite sides of the umbrella are the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia. You see them go around the Pole Star as the umbrella slowly turns. We know, of course, that the sky does not really turn, but that the earth does the turning; the effect is the same.

You can take the two stars at the end of the cup of the Big Dipper and draw a straight line to the North Star. You can also draw a line from the star on the top back of the cup of the dipper to the North Star and then beyond to a star in what looks like a big W. That is Cassiopeia. Cassiopeia and the Big Dipper proceed in a circle around the pole star from our vantage point on earth. The two constellations wind backward or counterclockwise around the pole star one full circle over the course of a day. One turn takes 23 hours and 56 minutes to be exact. That is about four minutes less than a solar day. By looking at their position in the sky, you can use a special chart, do a little math, and find out the approximate standard time.⁴⁰

Not only did God create the stars, He set everything in motion and keeps everything working in clockwork precision. Why is it that we sometimes have the tendency to want to instruct the One Who is running the observatory?

Scientific Foreknowledge Of The Sphere of Earth

One of the most amazing examples of scientific foreknowledge is found in Job 38:12-15:

Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.

As the light spreads across the world, it reveals the details of the landscape like the unfolding of a beautiful garment taken out of a dark closet or the impression of a seal on clay. Now notice this: what is turned? The earth is turned. Clay is put on a potter's wheel and turned and receives the impression of the seal. How is that like the earth? The earth rotates. What does the rotation control? It controls light and darkness.⁴¹ What an amazing pre-scientific statement this is!

Much, much more could be written on this amazing topic. However, when you look at the heaven's declaration of God and then consider the written revelation by which God has communicated His thoughts to us, you are made to wonder how man can often be so blind and so foolish as to reject God and His will? Truly, "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psm. 14:1). If we cannot look at the universe and see evidence therein of the power, wisdom, and never-failing care of the Creator, then we are blind, blind, blind!

Have you heard the story of the three blind mice? Imagine a family of mice who lived all their lives in a large piano. In their piano-world came the music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. At first, the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was someone who made music—though invisible to them—above, yet close to them. They loved to think of the "Great Player" whom they could not see. Then, one day, a daring mouse climbed partly up the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had found out how the music was made. **Wires** were the secret—tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths which trembled and vibrated. They must revise all their old beliefs; none of them but the most conservative could any longer believe in the Unseen Player. Later, another explorer carried the explanation further.

Hammers were now the secret—numbers of hammers dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world. The Unseen Player came to be thought a myth. **But the pianist continued to play!**⁴²

This story of the three blind mice amply illustrates many today who are blind, blind, blind when it comes to the existence of God. They refuse the evidence in the heavens and earth of His existence. But, in doing so, they render their earthly life ultimately meaningless, for God is the source of all that is ultimately meaningful.⁴³ Let us be reminded of Revelation 4:11: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 6

Because Of The Earth Beneath

David Brown

Introduction

A *FACT POSSESSES THE QUALITY* of being actual. Therefore, a fact is incontrovertible. Thus, the facts in a case testify to the truth of whatever the case concerns. Furthermore, the nature of truth is that it is absolute and objective. Truth is just what a thing is—it is reality. Hence, truth does not contradict truth anymore than reality contradicts reality. When the Bible speaks of facts pertaining to secular history, sociology, anthropology, geography, biology, zoology, and so on, harmony, and not contradiction, between the Bible and such disciplines is found.

Therefore, scientific facts do not contradict Biblical facts, and scientific truth does not contradict Biblical Truth. This cannot be said of scientific theories. Theories are not proven. They are at best educated guesses.

Thus, in the disciplines of archaeology and oceanography, we may be sure that there is no contradiction between these disciplines of study and God's Word. To the contrary, the facts found in archaeology and oceanography serve to authenticate Bible facts and the Bible truth derived therefrom.

What Are Biblical Archaeology And Oceanography?

For our purpose in this chapter, we may define “Biblical archaeology” to be the scientific investigation of historical remains pertaining to such matters as are recorded in the Bible. Archaeology comes from two Greek words—*archaios*, meaning “ancient,” and *logos*, meaning “study of.” In Josephus’ work, **The Antiquities Of The Jews**, the word “Antiquities” translates “archaeology.”¹

Except to refute it, we want to emphasize that we are not interested in any philosophy of archaeology that spins someone’s farfetched notions or hobbies into their approach to, as well as their interpretation of, archaeological discoveries. We are interested in specific facts and what they explicitly reveal or imply about the confirmation of the Biblical narrative. And, while it is interesting to study the development of Biblical archaeology over the last 200 years, this is not the purpose of this chapter. Suffice it to say that modern archaeological investigation as we know it did not begin until the nineteenth century.

In general, oceanography is the scientific study of the physical, chemical, and biological aspects of the oceans and seas of the earth. As it relates to the Bible, oceanography concerns Bible accounts related to the bodies of water primarily, but not exclusively, in and around the Near East.

The Bias Of Some “Scholars” Against The Bible

Because the Bible is a religious book, notwithstanding that many archaeological discoveries are religious or connected to religion, many “scholars” consider it to be biased and not trustworthy. Based on their assumption, they have criticized it accordingly. Thus, while

other ancient documents are accepted as true until proven false, the Bible is considered false until proven true. These “scholars” hold this biased view of the Bible because of what they perceive as a lack of external evidence to substantiate the events, people, places, and so on, recorded in the Bible. This lack of external evidence, they say, places the Bible in doubt. And, here, we turn to the findings of the late and noted British historian and archaeologist Sir William Ramsey as a prime example of a learned man who “learned” otherwise than his fellow skeptic scholars.

Ramsey was a skeptic regarding the accuracy of the New Testament. Therefore, he was especially interested in the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. The reason for his interest in these two books was Luke’s many historical and geographical references in them. As excavation after excavation proceeded, without exception, the evidence discovered by Ramsey’s team corroborated Luke’s historical and geographical references. Luke recorded many governors that numerous historians did not think existed, but they were confirmed by the evidence from Ramsey’s archaeological “digs.” Luke was precise in naming 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands. After his thorough investigation, Ramsey confessed and concluded:

I began with a mind unfavorable to it...but more recently I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.²

Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.³

In comparing Biblical historical accounts with secular ones, a person is startled with the high degree of

preeminence of the historical accounts found in the Bible over the secular ones. R. D. Wilson, a reputable Biblical scholar, scrupulously investigated 29 kings from 10 different ancient nations. Each nation had corroborating archaeological artifacts. The 29 kings are recorded in the Bible and are acknowledged by secular historians. Therefore, a comparison between the Biblical and secular record of the 29 kings was made possible. Wilson demonstrated that the names, as they appear in the Bible, matched the artifacts completely in every respect. The Bible was also completely accurate in its chronological order of the kings.

On the other hand, Wilson proved that the secular accounts were often incorrect and undependable. Eminent historians of antiquity made many mistakes. These ancient historians include the librarian of Alexandria, Ptolemy, and Herodotus. They did not document names accurately, and names were misspelled. In many cases names were barely recognizable when compared to their relevant artifacts or monuments. In some cases different evidence was needed to extract the real thing.⁴

In addressing the question of what archaeology can do for Bible study, Gonzalo Baez-Camargo wrote:

In a word, the contribution of archaeology to the study of the Bible is to cast light on the historical and cultural stage in which occurred those events which revealed the intervention of God in human affairs as he unfolded his plans for the redemption of humanity.⁵

The late Andre Parrot, professor in the School of the Louvre and curator-in-chief of the French National Museums, who headed the mission which excavated Mari, summed up three principal aspects of the contribution that archaeology has contributed to the study of the Bible. “Firstly, it has confirmed **historical facts**” narrated in the Bible:

Secondly, archaeology has established the exact location of places...The sites once rediscovered and located on the ground, it seems that the Revelation becomes more tangible...but archaeology has done more than simply confirm secular or sacred history and rediscover its sites. It has restored to us the soul of those vanished peoples itself, by revealing in the documents dug from the soil their way of life. It shows us the God of Revelation at work.⁶

Recognized for his reputation as one of the great archaeologists, William F. Albright wrote, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.” Albright continued:

The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.⁷

Regarding the indisputable similarity of archaeological discovery and the Scriptural record, Yale University archaeologist Miller Burrows wrote:

On the whole however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.⁸

David Rohl, historian, author, Egyptologist, and archaeologist wrote:

The narratives contained in the Old Testament are consistent with the general cultural setting revealed through Egyptian and Levantine

archaeology—once the correct chronology is applied.⁹

Without initially starting out to discover the historical Bible, I have come to the conclusion that much of the Old Testament contains real history.¹⁰

Of course, it is impossible to corroborate all the incidents found in the Bible, but the discoveries of archaeology since the middle of the nineteenth century have verified the reliability and credibility of the Bible accounts. And it is obvious from the previous quotes by archaeologists that all scholars have not been of a biased persuasion. Nelson Glueck, the noted Jewish archaeologist, declared:

It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.¹¹

This statement shall be demonstrated to be correct in the material to follow, which is composed of examples of archaeological discoveries that give the Bible unswerving and convincing trustworthiness. Let us now begin to note the examples from the Bible that verify the accuracy of the Bible.

Oceanography

Avowed agnostic, scientist, and Documentary Hypothesis proponent Charles Pellegrino offered evidence of Biblical import/export trade, naval travel, as well as brick and cedar building materials, tools, and weapons of the Bible. He recorded:

Karnak's written record [c.a. 2100 B.C.] tells of cedar being shipped from as far away as Crete and Syria.¹²

But never [before] has there been evidence of a full-blown Minoan settlement along the coast [of modern-day Israel], and finding an outpost of the world's first naval empire so far inland as the Galilee is even more surprising.¹³

A second Minoan outpost, apparently dating to the time of the Thera explosion, or perhaps a little earlier, had been unearthed at Avaris, Egypt. In pre-Eighteenth Dynasty times, Avaris was the capitol of Egypt's Hyksos oppressors (and according to Israelite oral traditions, was the city from which the Exodus began)...They had the world's first navy, but it begins to look as if their real power was in trade.¹⁴

Turning to the Bible, we find Jonah recording his account of being swallowed by the great fish. He wrote:

For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God (Jonah 2:3-6).

Notice that Jonah said, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains." Question: In about 860 B.C., how did Jonah know there were underwater mountains? Science could not supply him with this information. Only by God's informing him about these sub-ocean mountains could Jonah have known about them.

Early in the 1800's, Matthew Fontaine Maury read the following scripture: "The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psm. 8:8). He specifically noticed the words, "the paths of the seas." Thereby was discovered that the oceans

are not large, still bodies of water without a current. Again, the Bible was ahead of science in supplying what technology would not be able to reveal through empirical facts until thousands of years later. These paths of the sea are called “planktons” by modern oceanographers. Indeed, the Cromwell Current runs over 13,000 miles through the Pacific Ocean. The Florida Current has more than 4,000 times the flow of the Mississippi River.

Around 1,000 B.C. David wrote, “And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils” (Psm. 18:15). The science of his day could not have supplied David with this knowledge. Except by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he could not have known of these “submarine canyons,” as they are called today.

Job and the writer of Proverbs recorded the following:

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?
(Job 38:16).

When he established the clouds above: when he
strengthened the fountains of the deep (Prov.
8:28).

Notice that Job referred to “the springs of the sea” and that the Proverbs writer used the words “fountains of the deep.” Today, these great springs that open onto the ocean floors are well known. But how did these writers know of them except that God put this knowledge into their minds?

Archaeological Evidence Corroborating The Accuracy Of The Old Testament

A number of significant discoveries exist that serve to bear witness to the events of the Bible—especially in the Old Testament. We will list a few of them and comment briefly about some and much more about others.

1. **Amarna Letters:** These were written about 1400 B.C. and corroborate the Bible's description of the land of Palestine during the time of the Exodus.¹⁵

2. **Black Obelisk of Shalmanezer:** It resides in the British Museum in London. Carved into it are rows of pictures. The image of Jehu, king of Israel, paying tribute to Shalmanezer III of Assyria is on the second row of pictures. The inscription reads, "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri."¹⁶

3. **Cyrus Cylinder:** It testifies to the release of the Hebrews by Cyrus The Mede (cf. 2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4).¹⁷

4. **Lachish Letters** (a.k.a. Lachish ostraca): The letters are military letters written in haste on clay potsherds as the Babylonian armies swept toward them.¹⁸

5. **Moabite Stone:** References to "Yahweh" and "Omri, king of Israel." Of Omri it states, "he oppressed Moab many days...and his son succeeded him, and he also said I will oppress Moab."¹⁹

6. **Rosetta Stone:** The same text in Greek, hieroglyphics, and Egyptian Demotic is recorded thereon. It was this stone that allowed for scholars to learn how to read Egyptian hieroglyphics. Before its discovery no one could read Egyptian hieroglyphics.²⁰

Before we close this list, it is important to note that, for a number of years, an "ivory pomegranate" belonging to the Israel Museum and purported to be the only relic from Solomon's temple, has traveled the world receiving much attention. In recent months the veracity of this relic has been called into question. On its website the Israel Museum has the following information regarding the "ivory pomegranate":

In December 2004 the findings of a scientific study initiated by the Israel Museum and the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed that the

inscription on the Ivory Pomegranate, and ancient object in the Museum's collections, was added in modern times. The artifact, believed to be the head of a ceremonial scepter, was first seen in 1979 and came into the collection as a gift in 1988. Based on its inscription, the pomegranate had been considered the only known relic from the First Temple in Jerusalem.

Before its arrival in the Museum, the pomegranate was examined by leading epigraphists (scholars of ancient inscriptions) and deemed authentic. The recent reexamination, which used an environmental scanning electron microscope, subjected the inscription and patina to closer scrutiny than had been possible before. The new study shows that although the object itself dates to the late Bronze Age (14th-13th century BCE), its inscription is not ancient.

The Israel Museum believes that it is important for the public to understand the process of authentication, and the techniques involved, as well as the interplay of scholarship, connoisseurship, and science which informs archaeological research. The pomegranate will be shown in the archaeology galleries as an example of this ongoing process.²¹

If nothing else, this incident should serve to assure us that artifacts of antiquity are subjected to intense scrutiny in order to determine if such items are genuine or frauds. Other items of archaeological interest concerning confirmation of Biblical matters could be enumerated, but the preceding ones will suffice. In the material to come, more details will be offered.

Before 1947 the oldest completed version of the Old Testament was the Aleppo Codex, c.a. A.D. 1008. This is the oldest complete version of the many manuscripts that support the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament Scriptures. In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The significance of that discovery is that the Dead Sea Scrolls predate the Masoretic Text by some 1,200 years.

As usual, there are minor scribal variants between the Masoretic and Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts. However, these documents emulate each other with great precision.²²

Let us notice archaeological evidence for the authenticity of Genesis and the tribe of Benjamin. Regarding the Mari Tablets, Albright writes:

The excavation of Mari began in 1933, under the direction of Andre Parrot. Situated on the Middle Euphrates, Mari was one of the most important centers of the Northwest Semitic life of patriarchal times. In 1936, M. Parrot unearthed many thousands of cuneiform tablets dating mostly from about 1700 B.C., which are now in course of being studied and published. These tablets throw direct light on the background of the patriarchal traditions of Genesis....

Now we can speak even more emphatically, and with a wealth of additional detail. For example, the city of Nahor which plays a role next to Haran in the Patriarchal stories (Gen. 24:10) turns up frequently along with Haran in the Mari documents about 1700 B.C. The name of a prince of Mari, Arriyuk, is evidently the same as the Arioch of Genesis 14. "Benjamin" often appears as a tribal name at Mari.²³

Turning to Charles Pellegrino again, we note his observations on the Qumran text. He observed:

The Qumran texts are at most a thousand years older than the Aleppo Codex, which was written in Israel about A.D. 900 and was, until A.D. 1947, the oldest-known Hebrew manuscript containing the full text of the Bible. What has surprised most scholars is that in spite of the millennium of hand copying that separates them, the Aleppo Codex and the books of the Old Testament unearthed at Qumran are virtually identical. One of the oldest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating to about 200 B.C., is the Book of Isaiah. Only thirteen minor variations from the Aleppo text (and from its modern descendants) have been identified. During the

approximately three and a half centuries separating the Qumran Book of Isaiah from the version originally compiled in Babylon, one might be tempted to posit even fewer changes than during the eleven centuries separating Qumran and Aleppo. If this assumption is correct, then the modern Hebrew Bible is, in most essentials, the same Bible one would have found in Babylon about 550 B.C. Evidence supporting this assumption can be found in Jerusalem's silver scroll—which is, next to the writing on the 750 B.C. wall of Deir Alla, the earliest fragment of biblical text presently known. The scroll of beaten and inscribed silver was contained in a one-inch-diameter prayer amulet. Construction workers found it in A.D. 1981, when they accidentally broke into a grave site under New Jerusalem's cinema district. The verses on the scroll are literally microscopic, and are indistinguishable from the priestly benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. The biblical fragment, dating between 700 and 500 B.C., is almost an exact contemporary with the Babylonian compilations and reads: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and give thee peace." The modern biblical version reads: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee: The Lord lift up his countenance to thee, and give thee peace." More than twenty-five hundred years...yet we witness no mutation of the text. The DNA of moths living on the Hawaiian Islands has undergone vastly greater change in that same time frame. It is a testimony to the amazing fidelity of transmission, through dozens of generations of pious scribes, once the old song stories and oral histories were committed to writing.²⁴

Concerning the Garden of Eden, Pellegrino observed:

The P-document, too, picked up a distinct flavor of the Tigris-Euphrates, including Babylonian views of cosmic origins based upon nearly three thousand years of thought dating back to the founding Sumerian tribes...Consequently, in

Genesis 2:14 the Garden of Eden is placed squarely in the land of the Hiddekel (known to the Greeks as the Tigris) and Euphrates rivers.²⁵

It is easy to think of the Tigris and Euphrates as two separate rivers. But satellite photos tell [us] that in antiquity there were at least four or five different branches cutting through the plain (and Genesis 2:10-14 seems to agree with the satellite view, describing a river parting into four heads, their names Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Perat).²⁶

Pellegrino also wrote of the evidence of an immense flood, an ark, and the loading of animals:

The Jewish calendar places the Creation at 3761 B.C. Christian scholars have placed it at 4004 B.C. Archaeologists and geologists have discovered that certain events described in Genesis and Exodus appear to be based upon incidents that actually did occur. Around 2800 B.C., for example, the entire plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was so thoroughly flooded that all human settlements were buried beneath thick layers of mud, and Babylonian scribes began recording the legend of man commanded by his god to build an ark and to load the animals upon it.²⁷

Finally, Pellegrino cited evidence for the Tower of Babel. He wrote, "Some of these legendary, crumbling ziggurats are believed to have formed the basis for the story of Babel's tower."²⁸

The domestication and use of camels have also been corroborated. Over the years scholars claimed that the Bible's use of the term "camel" was nothing more than a relic. But they were wrong. It has been proven that camels were used in the Near East as early as the second millennium B.C. Evidence for the camels' presence and their domestication can be found in Mesopotamian lexical lists, a Sumerian text from Nippur, as well as in the

discovery of camels' bones in Mari (25th-24th century B.C.) and in Palestine (2000-1200 B.C.). A figurine of this "beast of burden" has also been uncovered in Byblos that dates back to 19th-18th century B.C.²⁹

Evidence for the Biblical-Patriarchal customs was found in the Nuzi Tablets. The recently discovered second-millennium Nuzi Tablets clarify many of the patriarchal customs and laws found on the pages of the Old Testament. S. H. Horn, in his article, "Recent Illumination of the Old Testament" (**Christianity Today**), introduces the Nuzi Tablets:

The discovery of a whole archive of legal and social texts at Nuzi, a small place in northeastern Iraq, has revealed that the social and legal background of the patriarchal age is reflected accurately and in great detail in the Old Testament patriarchal narratives...First, in the patriarchal stories we find several strange accounts of a barren wife who asked her husband to produce a child for her by her maid servant. Sarah did this, and later also Jacob's two wives, Rachel and Leah. Today we know that this practice was not unusual during the patriarchal age. The laws of that period as well as ancient marriage contracts mention it. For example, in a marriage contract from Nuzi, the bride Kelimninu promises in written form to procure for her husband Shennima a slave girl as a second wife, if she fails to bear him children. She also promises that she will not drive out the offspring of such a union. In no other period besides the patriarchal age do we find this strange custom.³⁰

Abraham was a historical figure of past time and space (history). Found on the walls of the great temple at Karnak, Egypt is evidence regarding the Egyptian kings' victory over such places within Palestine as Esdraelon, Transjordan, the hill country of Judah and Israel, et al. One of the more interesting locations suffering defeat was the Field of Abram. This is

presumed to be Hebron (cf. 1 Kings 14:25-26). This is one of the few references outside of Palestine that confirm the patriarchs' connection with that part of the world.³¹

In the Jordan Valley, archaeological evidence was discovered by Unger and Glueck for some seventy sites or cities. Many of these sites date back to the second and third millennia B.C. Without question this area was well populated. Moreover, the Five Cities of the Plain (Jordan, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zoar) were more than a distinct possibility to be among these settlements.³²

As to the construction of houses during the time of Sodom, evidence for the type of heavy doors on Lot's house was corroborated in the discoveries at Tell Beit Mirsin (Kirjath-Sepher of the Bible).³³

Pellegrino also offers evidence for Sodom, Gomorrah, and their Satanic worship:

Sodom and Gomorrah (Sedom and Amora, in the original Hebrew) were said to have met that same fate, along with two other "cities of the plain." Like Abraham and Nimrod, Sodom, if it existed at all, must have entered the Old Testament as a telescoping of oral traditions from diverse places. The City of the Dead [Mashkan-shapir] fitted many requirements of the biblical Sodom and as such might have brought some very real grains of truth to the heart of the legend. It died by fire and was never inhabited again. Its last citizens are said to have served abominable gods, for which (in Deuteronomy 29:15-27) the "anger of the Lord burned against this land." It was fascinating to know that here they worshipped an underworld deity who had all the characteristics of a satanic prototype.³⁴

The following facts offer interesting evidence and are highly significant regarding the images stolen by Rachel from Laban, her father. Archaeological discoveries at Yorgan Tepe and Nuzi explain why Laban perhaps

incessantly pursued his daughter Rachel over the theft of the family's images or "teraphim." The bearer of such an object could lay legal claim to the entire family holdings in one final swoop.³⁵

Evidence of the Hebrews was found within the writings of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Thera:

In the strata above Sorek's Stonehenge, strewn with broken and discarded bits of Mesopotamian housewares, archaeologists can actually watch the influx of new peoples, among them the Hebrews, who were part of a larger cluster of skilled migrant shepherds and intercity traders known from cuneiform tablets as "Apirus" and "Habirus."³⁶

Egyptian texts make no distinction between Hebrews and Canaanites. They are simply grouped together as "Hyksos and Asiatics," or "people of the bow," or "the people beyond the sands [of Sinai]."³⁷

From the Abrahamic Covenant, through Joseph and Moses, to and including the Exodus, the Thera culture lists a complete chronology of the Hebrews.³⁸

Evidence that the Hittites existed refuted the modernists of years ago and today:

The "assured results of higher criticism" said there were no Hittites at the time of Abraham, for there were no records of them apart from the Old Testament...As the result of archaeological finds, there are now hundreds of references overlapping more than 1,200 years of Hittite civilization.³⁹

The Ebla Tablets rebut the Documentary Hypothesis Theory. Advocates of the Documentary Hypothesis adamantly declared that writing did not occur until long after Moses. In addition, they had rejected the advanced priestly code supposedly recorded during Moses' lifetime

as “far-too advanced for the inhabitants of that age.” However, since 1974, 17,000 tablets have been unearthed near Ebla which not only testify that writing was well established before Moses, but also that an “advanced priestly code” existed. In fact, one thousand years before the birth of Moses, each of these skills was in use.⁴⁰

Let us now notice the abundant evidence for the historicity of Joseph:

The following, a summary of Howard Vos’s discussion of the question of Joseph’s admittedly unique rise [in Egypt], is found in his *Genesis and Archaeology*: “A Canaanite, Meri-Ra, became armor bearer to Pharaoh; another Canaanite, Ben-Mat-Ana, was appointed to the high position of interpreter; and a Semite, Yanhamu or Jauhamu, became deputy to Amenhotep III, with charge over the granaries of the delta, a responsibility similar to that of Joseph before and during the famine.⁴¹

Furthermore, Rohl commented on Joseph in Egypt:

Joseph, son of Jacob, was vizier of Egypt during the reign of Amenemhat III—the most powerful pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom—and continued in office through the reigns of the first rulers of the 13th Dynasty.⁴²

The major administrative and agricultural reforms undertaken during the late 12th Dynasty were the work of the greatest vizier of Egypt during the Middle Kingdom who is now identified as the patriarch Joseph.⁴³

The extremely high Niles, recorded at Semna Gorge from the twentieth year of Amenemhat III, were the root cause of the severe famine in Egypt which played a major part in the Joseph story [Gen. 40-41].⁴⁴

Armed with Joseph’s warning of what was to come, did Amenemhat make any preparations for the very high inundations? Again the

archaeological evidence and the traditional histories of Manetho, Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus (along with the geographer Strabo) come together to show this was the case.⁴⁵

The elegant palace unearthed by the Austrian excavators at Tell ed-Daba, Area F, was originally erected as the residence for the vizier Joseph in the regional capital of Avaris—the headquarters of the delta administration known as the Department of the North.⁴⁶

Joseph's life is also substantiated in John Elder's book, **Prophets, Idols And Diggers**. He wrote:

In the last verses of Genesis it is told how Joseph adjured his relatives to take his bones back to Canaan whenever God should restore them to their original home, and in Joshua 24:32 it is told how his body was indeed brought to Palestine and buried in Shechem. For centuries there was a tomb at Shechem revered as the tomb of Joseph. A few years ago the tomb was opened. It was found to contain a body mummified according to Egyptian custom, and in the tomb, among other things, was a sword of the kind worn by Egyptian officials.⁴⁷

The pyramid tomb, discovered by Manfred Bietak and his team in Area F at Tell ed-Daba, was the original burial place of the patriarch/vizier Joseph (before his body was removed by Moses for reburial in the Promised Land). The shattered limestone head and shoulders found in the tomb originally formed the upper part of a cult statue of Joseph, awarded to him by Amenemhat III for the Hebrew vizier's outstanding services to the Egyptian nation during a time of great trials and tribulations.⁴⁸

The following is a part of the evidence showing that the Israelites were in Egypt and were in a state of slavery:

The Israelite Sojourn in Egypt began in the late 12th Dynasty and continued throughout most

of the 13th Dynasty. It is represented in Egypt's archaeological record by the Asiatic culture known as Middle Bronze IIA. The main settlement of Israelites in Egypt was located at the city of Avaris in the region of Goshen. Their archaeological remains are represented by the dwellings and tombs of Tell ed-Daba strata H to G/1.⁴⁹

Egyptologists have recognized that the appellation Habiru is the equivalent of the term Apiru found in Egyptian texts dating from the Middle and New Kingdoms whilst a number of biblical authorities have concluded that the designation Habiru/Apiru is also one and the same as the biblical term Ibrim (the plural of Ibrī = Hebrew which stems from the eponymous ancestor Elber).⁵⁰

According to Egypt's Leningrad papyrus (1116A), some immigrant peoples were subjected to compulsory labor during the century after the Hyksos expulsion leading up to and through the reign of Tuthmosis III. In a condition of slavery they were recruited and forced to work in state quarries, in gold mines, and in the building of sacred temples. The Egyptian record is consistent with the Exodus account of Hebrew servitude, in which the Israelites were drafted for slave labor in connection with public building projects.⁵¹

The following material reveals more evidence regarding the Israelites in bondage. However, it reveals much more. It relates facts relating to the Egyptian efforts to destroy the Hebrew male children, as well as the reality of Menahem, Issachar, the Clan of Asher, and Shiprah:

The Brooklyn Museum possesses a tattered papyrus roll, whose uninspiring catalogue number is Brooklyn 35.1446.1. The papyrus was originally purchased by Charles Wilbour, the intrepid "secret agent" of Emil Brugsch sent to Thebes in 1881 on a mission to ferret out the tomb robbers believed to have found an intact royal tomb. (As you now know that tomb turned

out to be the famous Royal Cache.) Wilbour's papyrus roll is dated to the reign of Sobekhotep III, the predecessor of Neferhotep I, and therefore the king who reigned in Egypt a generation before the birth of Moses in the New Chronology. The biblical narrative tells us that, prior to the birth of Moses, the Israelite population was subjugated by the native Egyptians and forced into slavery...The RECTO of the Brooklyn Papyrus contains a copy of a royal decree by Sobekhotep III which authorizes the transfer of ownership of a group of domestic slaves/servants (Egy. *khenmu*) to an estate in the Tibetan area. The VERSO then contains a list of household servants which can probably be identified with the slave group mentioned on the recto. Analysis of the list of servants reveals that over fifty per cent of the ninety-five names are Semitic in origin. These foreign servants are each clearly designated as *aamu*—the Egyptian term for "Asiatic." Their Egyptian names are also separately listed—the names given to them by their owners. For example we read: "The Asiatic *Dodihuatu*, who is called *Ankhuemhesut*"...So, half of the domestic slaves of this Egyptian estate were Asiatics who had been given Egyptian names. What is more, when we study actual appellations themselves we find that several are biblical names: (a) Thus we see at position 11 the name "Menahem" later recorded for the sixteenth king of Israel (743-738 BC); (b) At 13, 14, 16, 22 and 67 we have variants of the tribal eponym "Issachar" the name of the fifth son of Leah by Jacob; (c) At 23 the name of the clan "Asher" occurs, named after its eponymous ancestor, the second son of Zilpah by Jacob; (d) And finally at position 21 we read "Shiphrah," the name carried by one of the two Hebrew midwives instructed to kill the Israelite newborn males in Exodus 1:15-21.⁵²

We now turn our attention to evidence pertaining to the Egyptian plagues recorded in the book of Exodus:

Do we have any evidence of a sudden catastrophe at Avaris which might in some way mirror the

events of the Exodus tradition [the 10 Plagues]? The answer is a qualified yes...At the end of stratum G/1 at Tell ed-Daba, which is roughly dated to the end of the 13th Dynasty, Bietak and his archaeological team began to uncover a gruesome scene. All over the city of Avaris they found shallow burial pits into which the victims of some terrible disaster had been hurriedly cast. These were no careful interments of the deceased. The bodies were not arranged in the proper burial fashion but rather thrown into the mass graves, one on top of the other. There were no grave goods placed with the corpses as was usually the custom. Bietak is convinced that we have here direct evidence of plague or some other sudden catastrophe at Avaris...What is more, analysis of the site archaeology suggests that a large part of the remaining population of the town abandoned their homes and departed from Avaris en masse.⁵³

“It is inconceivable what happened to the land,” begins Egypt’s Ipuwer papyrus, which may be the best-preserved nonbiblical memory we have of “the dust cloud of Israel” and the ten plagues of Egypt. The Ipuwer’s description of these occurrences is staggeringly similar to the Exodus account. The Egyptian Ipuwer records: “terrible noise...for nine days...devastation, blood everywhere...pestilence...the sun in the heavens resembles the moon...foreign bow people Hebrews]...thunderings...lightnings...thick darkness...the sun is covered and does not shine...there remained no green thing...townships are laid waste...thunder and hail, and the fire ran down upon the ground...smote throughout the land...both man and beast...And a foreign bow people are come to Egypt! (Ipuwer)/The children of Yisrael [people of the bow] who came into [Mizrayim]/Egypt (Exod. 1:1)... People flee (Ipuwer)/ And it was told the king of [Egypt] that the people had fled (Exod. 14:5)...and it is tents that they make like [nomadic] bedu (Ipuwer)/And he [Moses] turned back to the camp: but his servant [Joshua]...did not depart out of the tent (Exod. 33:11).⁵⁴

Also, note the following evidence pertaining to Moses and the Exodus:

The bonded Asiatic servants recorded in various documents of the 13th Dynasty (especially Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446) are to be identified with the “mixed multitude” of Asiatics who eventually left Egypt under the leadership of Moses [Exod. 12:38]. The Israelite population, descended from Jacob, formed the major part of this group and a number of Hebrew/Israelite names can be recognized within the documents of the period.⁵⁵

(1) The city or land of Rameses is now to be identified with the archaeological site which stretches out over the territory to the north of the modern town of Fikus—ancient Phacusa/Pa-Gessem/Kessan which is equivalent to the Hebrew ‘Goshen.’ (2) Succoth is the Egyptian town of Tjeku, probably located in the Wadi Tumilat at the site of Tell el-Maskhuta. (3) The city of Pithom, also associated with Israelite slavery, may have been located at the site of Tell er-Retaba. (4) Moses led the people of Avaris south to Tjeku in order to gather the Israelites of Pithom before heading east along the wadi to Sinai. (5) The KJV translation of Yam Suf as the “Red Sea” has been proven a mistranslation. Translated correctly, the Red Sea becomes the ‘Sea of Reeds’ and has been properly located and identified as the Bitter lakes—salty marshes and swamps at the northern end of the peninsula. [It should be noted that some modernists have taken this a step too far by removing the miraculous from the Exodus account, erroneously arguing that the Reed Sea was only a marshy swamp that the Israelites could have traversed without a miraculous parting of the waters. However, even Pellegrino allows for water “forty feet high above the high-tide mark” (see his quote on p. 176). Hence, whether you call it the Red Sea or the Reed Sea, there was a miraculous parting of the waters, BJC]. (6) Other Exodus landmarks identified include: the Twelve

Springs of Elim, the desert of Sin, Rephidim (perhaps Serabit el-Khadim), the gulf of Akaba, the desert of Paran, the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea, the spring of Kadesh, the Sinai, the lands of Moab and Ammon, the river Amon, Heshbon, plains of Moab, River Jordan and the vicinity in which Moses was supposedly buried—opposite Beth-Peor.⁵⁶

The stories of the Exodus and Joshua, some will argue, are strictly “fairy tales.” But geology and archaeology have begun to teach us that several major Old Testament events that seem utterly fantastical to us today—among them the parting of the Egyptian waters, the blotting out of the sun, the pillars of fire in the sky—are based upon some very real kernels of truth. The rocks and the ruins tell us so. As one who remains to this day agnostic (no good scientist can be an atheist, for in science we must question everything, even our own questions), all of this has come as a great surprise. According to the late Alex Haley (who demonstrated most dramatically the fidelity of oral history), “I was a blind fool to have been so surprised.”⁵⁷

Traces of what appear to be an Exodus tradition apart from the Hebrew version do exist. The Greek geographer and historian Strabo (who lived between 60 B.C. and A.D. 20) described an army—already an ancient legend by his standards—drowned in the sea.⁵⁸

Phoenician legend (as recorded by Greek scribes, including Herodotus, the “Father of History,” who lived between 484 and 425 B.C.) seems to preserve a nonbiblical memory of an Exodus out of Egypt.⁵⁹

University of Toronto Egyptologist Donald Redford wonders if the slaughter of the sons of Aegyptos [Egypt] has anything to do with the slaying of Egypt’s firstborn as described in Exodus 11:5-7. The connection does not seem at all unreasonable, since before his flight to Argos, Danaos is said to have led a sojourn of foreigners expelled from the Nile.⁶⁰

There is only one chain of historical events, recorded in Egypt, that can accommodate this tradition, and that is the Hyksos descent to, occupation of, and ultimate expulsion from the Nile.⁶¹

At a shrine near Karnak (built to honor “the Greek Speos Artemidis”), John’s Hopkins University Egyptologist Hans Goedicke has translated an inscription dating from the time of Tuthmosis III. It reads, in part: “And when I allowed the abominations of the gods [immigrant peoples] to depart, the earth swallowed their footsteps. This was the directive of the Primeval Father [water, according to Egyptian beliefs] who came one day unexpectedly.”⁶²

Concerning the Red (“Reed”) Sea’s reality, Pellegrino records:

When the sea returned—faster than any charioteer could hope to flee—it was forty feet above the high-tide mark. This is evinced by the salt water, tidal marks left in the vicinity of the Reed Sea—carbon dated to the same biblical era in which it was reported.⁶³

Exodus 9:8 tells us that at God’s instructions Moses held out his arm toward the sky and sprinkled soot from the furnace heavenward “that it shall become a fine dust all over Egypt.” Today, on the Nile Delta, in a time horizon coincident with Tuthmosis III, we scientists can actually see, and feel, and probe with our instruments a layer of fine volcanic dust. We do not know that a man named Moses ever existed, but black, ground-hugging clouds, easterly winds, walls of water, and dust there were, in great abundance. The rocks tell us so.⁶⁴

Let us now consider important evidence pertaining to Jericho at the time Joshua destroyed it:

During the excavations of Jericho (1930-1936) Garstang found something so startling that a

statement of what was found was prepared and signed by himself and two other members of the team.⁶⁵

What was so startling? That the walls had indeed fallen outwards just as Joshua had characterized (Josh. 6:20)⁶⁶:

The only written record to survive concerning the history of Jericho in the Late Bronze Age is that found in the Hebrew Bible. When we compare the remains of City Four with the biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we enter a fascinating convergence of archaeology and Scripture that includes warehouses whose stores of grain were left unplundered and, most interesting of all, tumbled walls.⁶⁷

Notice that the following quote's description of archaeological discoveries agrees perfectly with the Biblical account (Josh. 6):

More than just the defensive wall fell on that last day. The buildings behind the wall were destroyed by massive conflagration, but the collapse of the rooms (in which large quantities of unburned wood were buried under tons of fallen mud brick, and charred sticks were deposited on top of fallen bricks) seems to have taken place before they were affected by fire.⁶⁸

When Rohl's New Chronology is applied, both Kenyon's and Garstang's findings "prove" the biblical account regarding the sacking of Jericho: Kenyon found a thick deposit of red-brown earth which she interpreted as the remains of the great MB [Middle Bronze] city wall which had collapsed outwards and fallen down into the defensive ditch. The walls of MBA [Middle Bronze Age] Jericho had indeed tumbled down, thus affording any attacker easy access into the city by filling up the ditch which protected the base of Jericho's elaborate defensive system. Within the MBA city itself all the houses and civic buildings had been blackened by a severe conflagration. In some

places the ash and debris was a meter in depth...According to Joshua 3:15 the assault upon Jericho took place during the harvest season in the Jordan valley. When Garstang uncovered the floors of the houses of the MBA city he found large storage jars filled to the brim with carbonized grain. Evidence of mass burials in the rock-cut tombs of MBA Jericho, contemporary with the very last phase of the city's existence, suggested to Kenyon that a plague had struck in the period immediately prior to its destruction. The abundance of food in the city ruled out famine and there were no visible signs on the skeletal remains of war wounds. Her archaeological interpretation of a Jericho plague provides another striking parallel with the biblical narratives. We learn from the book of Numbers [Num. 25], that the Israelites themselves were devastated by a plague, whilst they were encamped at Shittim in Transjordan, immediately prior to their assault upon Jericho. Twenty-four thousand Israelites were struck down. It is just possible that the plague may have been brought into Jericho by Joshua's spies—sent to reconnoitre the city's defenses—where they were protected by the prostitute, Rahab, in her "house of ill-repute." Indeed, the Shittim plague was associated with widespread sexual intercourse which had been going on between the Israelite men and Moabite prostitutes prior to the invasion.⁶⁹

The following is more evidence of other cities of Canaan destroyed or bypassed by Joshua:

He [archaeologist John Brimson] has clearly shown that the cities which the biblical narrative records as being destroyed by Joshua were indeed burnt at this time. Equally, those cities which the Israelites left untouched were not burnt according to the archaeological evidence. The Bible and archaeology thus appear to be consistent.⁷⁰

The city destroyed by Joshua's army was MB IIB Hazor, burnt at the end of stratum XVI. The

Middle Bronze Age ruler of Hazor, Ibni, whose name appears on Tablet A2/3423/92/17-23086, may therefore be identified with King Jabin of Hazor who was put to the sword by the Israelites in Joshua 11:10.⁷¹

While there is so much more archaeological evidence available regarding the rest of the Old Testament narrative, the lack of space forbids continuing our examination of it. We now turn our attention to the archaeological evidence pertaining to the New Testament.

Archaeological Evidence Supporting The New Testament

Excavations in the late 19th, early 20th centuries, along with the “Copper Scroll” from Qumran, have identified the two pools in the northeast sector of Jerusalem as the Pool(s) of Bethesda. On the Copper Scrolls, these pools are referred to in Hebrew as the “Bethesh-dathain” or “the place of the two outpourings.”⁷² Also, “The excavations at Capernaum also unearthed a significant number of first-century milestones (sic).” The millstones to which Jesus referred in Luke 17:2 required two women to operate them.⁷³

In January of 1986, Moshe and Yuval Lufan discovered a first-century fishing vessel in their “digs” on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It was about 27 feet long. This meant it was large enough to hold 13 people. And this verifies the New Testament Biblical narrative regarding such in the books of the Gospel.⁷⁴

Before 1961 verification for the historicity of Pontius Pilate was unavailable. But in 1961, two Italian archaeologists discovered a two-by-three foot placard in Caesarea. It was inscribed with these words: “Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has presented the Tiberium to the Cesareans.”⁷⁵

The following is archaeological evidence of Paul's accuracy:

Paul makes mention of the city treasurer, Erastus (Rom. 16:23). During the excavation of Corinth in 1929, a pavement was found inscribed: ERASTUS PRO:AED:S:P:STRAVIT ("Erastus, curator of public buildings laid this pavement at his own expense").⁷⁶

J. A. Thompson reveals the confirmation of the Biblical report that Gallio was the Roman proconsul at the time of Paul's journey to Corinth (A.D. 51 or 52). This account is easily verified—Gallio was Seneca's (the Roman philosopher's) brother—and more than the Roman and Jewish records attest to these facts.⁷⁷

In 2 Corinthians 11:32 Paul writes of "the governor under King Aretas." Aretas is the Greek name for the Nabataean king Harithath IV. At one point these kings' dominion extended as far as Damascus, Syria. Coins and inscriptions have been discovered with Aretas' name as well as other Nabataean kings thereon.⁷⁸

Due to the lack of space, we will end our study here. However, let us urge all to realize that we have only reached toward the "hem of the garment," much less touched it, in noticing the vast amount of material available regarding Biblical archaeology. We hope that all who read this chapter will take it upon themselves to pursue this study to a greater depth. The closing words of Thompson in his book on Biblical archaeology, are appropriate for our closing to this chapter:

There is something exciting about supplementing the Biblical records with information from non-Biblical historians and from the thrilling discoveries of modern archaeology. It is very evident that the Biblical records have their roots firmly in general world history. Archaeological discovery supplements, explains, and at times corroborates the Biblical

story. The happy combination of the biblical records, the non-Biblical histories, and the discoveries of the archaeologists has produced such splendid results to date that we are full of optimism about the future. There is work for many centuries yet to be done. Many sites have yet to be excavated thoroughly and many others remain whose excavation has not yet commenced. If the achievements of the excavator up to the present have yielded such important results, what may the future hold for us?⁷⁹

Endnotes

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- 17 J. A. Thompson, **The Bible And Archaeology**, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 174-75. The Cylinder resides in the British Museum, London, UK.

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43 Ibid, p. 351.
44 Ibid, p. 342.
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CHAPTER 7

Because Of The Body Inside

David B. Smith

Introduction

FROM THE BEGINNING OF God's Word, men are warned of Satan's nefarious ways. He is a liar (Gen. 3:1; Gen. 3:4-5; John 8:44) and uses his mastery of deception to destroy the affections of men toward God (2 Cor. 11:3). He would leave men hopeless, miserable, and lost. None of his intentions for man is noble. He cannot, however, match the power of God; while he may be supra-human in strength, he is not omnipotent. He is, therefore, inherently disadvantaged in the fight for the souls of men, because the Omnipotent God has placed into the hands of men the weapon necessary to thwart the efforts of the devil—the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). This empowers man to "resist the devil" (Jas. 4:7) and, as Peter described, "resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9). It gives man the ability to say "no," so that "no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

As long as a man continues to keep that word working in his heart, he will disallow the lifestyle of sin Satan seeks to impose on men (1 John 3:9). In the words of a Psalmist, "thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psm. 119:11). The man who utilizes the Word of God properly will avoid that depressing, miserable existence fashioned by the devil; instead, he will have

delight (Psm. 119:92) and will carry songs in his heart (Psm. 119:54).

The devil has but one true option, if he hopes to gain the allegiance of men. He must in some way separate man from the Bible. Parabolically, he is described as a fowl that devours seed sown on the ground (Luke 8:5). Jesus explains, “then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Since he is a liar, it is not unexpected that he seeks to replace Scripture with lies. After all, “no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21), and lies condemn (2 Thess. 2:11-12). When truth is altered in any way, the product is a lie—be it an addition, subtraction, substitution, etc.

He can also prevent man from using the Word of God effectively by instilling doubt in the man that somehow the Precious Book Divine is outmoded. The Bible only works in the heart when it is mixed with faith (Heb. 4:2).

In the last century or so, he has been most successful in separating some men completely from the Sacred Text. More than wresting the Scriptures, and more than causing man to question the power of the Bible, he has caused some men to throw away the Bible as a corrupt, deceitful, unreliable book. Destructive textual critics, modernists, humanists, and the like have all worked with a common goal: to disprove the Bible as the inspired revelation from heaven. Since inspiration and infallibility are mutually inclusive, wicked men have sought to undo the inspiration of the Sacred Text by charging it with error. The field of scientific knowledge has been particularly stressed by opponents of the Bible, as if the Bible and science oppose each other.

In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, this form of attack against God’s Holy Book was already saturating the writings of the world’s most respected “Bible scholars” (a misnomer for sure)—perhaps not to the degree which it is

now expressed, but certainly present. In 1947, Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, lectured before the University of London on the development of modern scholarship as it pertained to the Bible. At one point, he remarked:

But in addition to the great increase in knowledge thus obtained, we have learnt [sic] a method of studying and understanding the Old Testament greatly superior to the uncritical methods of earlier generations, when knowledge was less and the materials for criticism which we now possess had not come to light. To put it briefly, we can abandon the “fundamentalist” doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture not merely without doing harm to its religious authority, but with a positive reinforcement of it...From this point of view we need no longer be distressed by the incompatibility of primitive Hebrew science with the science of Copernicus and Newton, which the Hebrews could not know, and we can understand that lower standards of morality... might be permissible as the Hebrews were gradually raised from the standards of their neighbors.¹

Kenyon’s statement should alarm readers, as he seeks to dispose of Biblical inerrancy and yet hold to the authority of the Scriptures. If the Bible is not inerrant, it is not authoritative.

The principal gear in Kenyon’s engine is (in his words) the “incompatibility of primitive Hebrew science” with modern science. His argument is not unlike that of theistic evolutionists. The fruit of this type of remark is doubt. Men who fall prey to such a lie can only say to themselves, “if the Bible is not accurate with regard to science, it cannot be truly inspired, and, if the Bible cannot be trusted with scientific and medical accuracy, then other parts cannot be trusted.” This is certainly not a casual issue; the very faith of men is at stake.

Although Kenyon's statement is wrong, it seems mild compared to the venomous speech of current critics of the Bible. Unlike Kenyon, they have no interest in holding to the Bible—except to steady it with one hand while the other applies Jehoiakim's penknife (Jer. 36:23). They want no part of the book from heaven. Dr. Lorence G. Collins, from the Department of Geological Studies at California State University Northridge, has presented an online article which attempts to discredit the Bible completely against the fields of science. After making ridiculous arguments on matters like the Bible's use of "heart" to describe the inner man, he concludes:

Efforts by "creation scientists" to explain these concepts and to make the Bible a perfect science textbook simply fail because the creation scientists rely on modern science to support their arguments rather than on the evidence of the Bible. They conveniently avoid using literal translations, where necessary, in order to make the Bible fit our present scientific understanding. The absence of scientific accuracy in some places in the Bible should not be surprising because it was never written by trained scientists to produce a science textbook. Even if it were written by scientists, because science is constantly producing new knowledge, it would be impossible for biblical-writers to anticipate all the changes that new discoveries require.²

Surely an educated man like Dr. Collins understands that the Bible is written to reveal the Scheme of Redemption, not to exegete the workings of nuclear physics. No defender of the Scriptures makes any claim that the Bible is an exhaustive treatise on every aspect of science. This kind of rhetoric by Collins, and others like him, is a smoke screen. Wayne Jackson offers a valid warning against such statements:

[I]t is generally the case, though, when such a statement is made, that the author of it intends to convey the impression that the Bible is scientifically vulnerable; that it contains, in fact, outmoded “scientific” data. That simply is not the case.³

As for Dr. Collins’ claim that “it is impossible for biblical-writers to anticipate all the changes that new discoveries require,” he is wrong again—on a number of accounts. First, his statement is worded in such a way as to suggest the possibility for the Bible writers to anticipate some discoveries, but he surely did not intend to allow for that. That is why he fails in a second point, because the Bible is not required to anticipate every medical discovery in order to be medically accurate. If only one statement of medical foreknowledge exists in the Bible, it is enough to establish proof of inspiration.

Third, Collins fails to understand the nature of inspiration. Apart from Divine guidance, it is impossible to know in advance the things that are still undiscovered. However, the Bible writers were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21), which makes possible the medical accuracy of the Bible and explains the existence of statements of medical foreknowledge in the Sacred Text. This will be the premise of the study—**that the Bible can be believed because of its medical accuracy.**

Qualifications For Medical Accuracy In The Bible

The cause of truth has been injured to some degree by men who define “medical accuracy” or “medical foreknowledge” differently from God. To some, medical foreknowledge is equal to prophetic statements of specific scientific discoveries (including the intricate details of those discoveries). In other words, men suggest that certain verses of the Bible prophetically point to scientific

discoveries within the last few centuries. It is the same kind of wresting of the text that offers fanciful applications of certain verses like “Joel 2:3-4 anticipates motor-cars; Isa. 31:5, aeroplanes; Rev. 9:1-11, submarines; Eccl. 10:20, radio; and Rev. 11:3-12, television.”⁴ In the field of scientific discovery, men have offered equally laughable suggestions—for example, that Hebrews 11:3 anticipates the discovery of atomic theories and that Genesis 1:4 prophesies the discovery of nuclear fission. It is no small wonder why skeptics prefer to lump the lunatics with real defenders of the faith, because it gives them an easy exit from debates that will destroy their own theories. If they can claim “behold the absurdity of your position(!),” they have, in their mind, already gained ground in the fight.

What they must understand, however, is that such fanciful interpretations are not representative of the cause of truth. Men who believe in and love the integrity of the Sacred Text, and understand its inspiration and authority, are opposed to every false way (Psm. 119:104). Ridiculous interpretations (or misrepresentations) are just as wrong as skepticism and unbelief.

“Medical foreknowledge” is not prophecy, though the two share commonalities. There is danger (see above) in making the two synonymous. Similarities between the two can be traced back to their point of origin—the component of God’s omniscience known as foreknowledge. The writer of Hebrews stated, “neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). This knowledge is without limitation; it is infinite: “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite” (Psm. 147:5). Hence, God has absolute knowledge of past, present, and future: “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from the ancient times the things that are

not yet done” (Isa. 46:9-10). Since God’s knowledge is absolutely perfect, He has no need to search the future and discern what will be. He cannot learn anything, seeing as He knows all things perfectly from eternity. Thiessen accurately describes this:

He knows things immediately, simultaneously, exhaustively and truly...The scope of God’s knowledge is infinite...God knows the future. From man’s standpoint God’s knowledge of the future is foreknowledge, but from God’s standpoint it is not, since he knows all things by one simultaneous intuition.⁵

This is the foundation, therefore, for both prophecy and medical accuracy in the Bible. It means that men wrote of things, medically speaking in this context, that could not have been known, except that the writing was inspired of God: “there were no telescopes and microscopes available...Knowledge of how the human body works was virtually non-existent.”⁶

If men were able to record facts of medical knowledge before those discoveries were possible, the only source from which that information could have been derived is God. If the Bible is merely the work of men, then it would reflect the medical theories contemporaneous with each of the Bible writers—not accurate details of science that were unknown to the medical world at that time. In the book **None Of These Diseases**, Drs. S. I. McMillen and David Stern make mention of the **Ebers Papyrus**, a medical book dating to around the time of the exodus of God’s people out of the land of Egypt. They explain:

The **Ebers Papyrus** lists hundreds of prescriptions, with an amazing array of ingredients: statue dust, beetle shells, mouse tails, cat hair, pig eyes, dog toes, breast milk, human semen, eel eyes, and goose guts. The best one can say about these medications is that at least they were “100 percent natural.”⁷

Listen to a few of the prescriptions found in that ancient medical text:

[To cure baldness] [a] mixture of six fats...[from] the horse, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cat, the snake, and the [wild goat].⁸

To prevent hair from turning gray, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in oil, or with the fat of a rattlesnake.⁹

Despite the advanced learning of the Egyptian culture, the medical practice of the day was still primitive and much of it dangerous. Yet Moses' writings reflect none of the superstitious and outrageous remedies from the land of his education and upbringing (Acts 7:22). How is it possible for Moses to present facts of medical science, unknown to the people of that era, that would not be discovered until many periods of time later? How can he be so medically accurate? Moses knew them by inspiration, and the presence of medical accuracy and statements of medical foreknowledge are a reason to believe the Bible.

Examples Of Medical Accuracy In The Bible

In what specific ways, then, is this manifested? What examples may be provided as proof of medical accuracy in the Bible? The following list is simple, but sufficient for the task at hand.

1. The human body can be subjected to anesthesia and opened for surgery (Gen. 2:21).

Adam's sleep was not the kind that accompanies fatigue, but, as Leupold observes:

a deep sleep, because it surely would have been in part almost a horrid experience to live through to see a portion of yourself removed. A sleep like that cause[d] by an anesthetic envelops man's feelings and consciousness.¹⁰

Of course, the action performed on Adam was exclusive and will never be repeated—since men now enter the world through the procreative process, not by creative actions of God (Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:1-2). The principle is nevertheless true for all time. Adam's surgery is medically accurate and predates the formal knowledge of this fact by mankind.

2. The circumcision of newborn males must occur eight days after birth (Gen. 17:12). God's time condition on the act of circumcision is based on the amount of time necessary for blood to clot in newborns, which involves vitamin K, prothrombin, and platelets. One scientist explains:

If the quantity of vitamin K is deficient, there will be a prothrombin deficiency and hemorrhaging may occur...Vitamin K—coupled with prothrombin—causes blood coagulation, which is important in any surgical procedure.¹¹

Only on the eighth day after birth is the necessary level of prothrombin present in a child. Thus, the question may be raised: how could Moses (the writer) know this? Also, how could Abraham know this? This discovery would not be made until many ages later, when technologies for such discoveries would exist. There is only one answer in the matter: this medical fact was recorded long before its discovery because the Creator of the universe revealed this fact through His selected men. It is yet another reason to believe the Bible, to trust in its inspiration and dependability.

3. The life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). The greater application of the passage is spiritual, as blood makes an atonement for the soul, but there is clearly a medical fact here: blood and physical life are inseparable. Henry M. Morris observes:

Continuance of life is now known to depend upon the continued supply of oxygen, water and food

to the cells of the body. This essential function is accomplished in a marvelous manner by the blood as it circulates constantly throughout the body, year after year. The role of blood in combating disease-producing organisms and in repairing injured tissues is one of the most significant discoveries of medical science, and the use of blood transfusions as one of the most beneficial treatments for many medical needs further testifies to the supreme importance of the blood in the life of the flesh.¹²

How could Moses know that life depends upon the intricate and important connection between oxygen and red blood cells? He could not know except that he was inspired by God. Lest the skeptics argue that Moses' statement is simplistic and therefore invalid, notice the emphasis of the fact presented by the great leader of God's Israel: life is "in" the blood. The statement would still be medically accurate if Moses claimed that without blood a man will die. However, Moses takes a further step and records that life has to do with what may be found inside of the blood. This is truly profound, and yet another reason to believe the Bible.

4. Human waste should be buried (Deut. 23:12-14). Men are wise enough now through research and discovery to know that sanitation is not a trivial issue. It is serious, deadly serious: "Decency and cleanliness promote health, and prevent many diseases."¹³ God's requirement for the burial of excrement was a preventive measure, because people who live in filth cannot be healthy. Listen as McMillen and Stern report some of the conditions present in the mid-1800's in London, a city noted at the time for its outbreaks of cholera:

The sewage kept them constantly sick. Constantly sick, they died young. Dying young, they left orphans. The cycle of poverty, sewage, sickness, and death continued from generation to generation...Chadwick had found one

orphanage of 1,400 children where 300 had caught cholera and 180 died. The orphanage basement formed a stagnant cesspool for the children's excrement. Orphans, both sick and well, slept three to four in a bed—the well children lying in the diarrhea of the sick.¹⁴

No wonder they were sick and dying. It was not until waste was disposed properly and the sickness isolated that things turned for good. All of it, and every occasion like it, could have been avoided by the sound advice from the inspired pen of Moses (Deut. 23:12-14):

[T]he Bible pointed the way to freedom from deadly epidemics of typhoid, cholera, and dysentery...Used as directed, this one-sentence prescription could have saved more lives than every drug ever made.¹⁵

Moses did not have the Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide years of scientific data in order that such a conclusion could be drawn regarding sanitation and the disposal of waste. How then did he come to this profound medical advice? God authored the writing, and this is a reason to believe the Bible.

Preventative Medical Principles In The Bible

This is not an attempt to open a different segment of study. The next few words merely form a word of advice, a recommendation for study, regarding another facet of this topic. General medical and health principles must be included in discussions like these, especially since many of the "hot topic" ethical issues today deal with medical principles found on the pages of Holy Writ. These principles are medically accurate statements, and thus fall under the general heading of this treatise.

For example, the Bible is clear that a babe inside of his mother's womb is a human being (Exod. 21:22; Luke 1:41).

That is a medically accurate statement, but generally is not added to these types of discussions. It should be, because it further establishes the power of the medical accuracy of the Bible. Or consider that the Bible teaches abstinence before marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-9). While there are certain spiritual applications in this matter, there are a number of physical applications, too. Medically speaking, abstinence is the only real way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. That is a medically accurate statement. The Bible also offers such sound medical advice as the need for a good diet, exercise, and rest. Doctors are now stressing these as keys to a happier and more energetic life, while the Bible has offered that advice for ages. Clearly then, some time and attention should be devoted to these principles from the Bible—as they relate to the general theme of medical accuracy/foreknowledge.

Conclusion

“Those willing to devote the time and effort to a study of the Bible’s scientific statements will discover that, far from being spurious or flawed, they are always unfailingly accurate.”¹⁶ That is what this matter deserves: time and effort. Far too little of each has been given to it, except by those who wish to disrupt the faith of men toward the God of heaven. The battle is serious, because souls rest in the balance. Saints must therefore take up the Sword of the Spirit and use it effectively to the destruction of every false way (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Learning how to use the medical accuracy of the Bible gives the lover of God the advantage in battle, and the right to say, “This is why you should believe the Bible, too.”

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- 10 H. C. Leupold, **Exposition Of Genesis**, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 134.
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CHAPTER 8

Because Of Its Amazing Unity

Billy Bland

Introduction

APPRECIATION IS EXTENDED TO the elders, brethren Con Lambert and Larry Everson, and to the evangelists, brethren B. J. Clarke and Wayne Jones, for the opportunity to be a part of the **POWER** Lectureship hosted annually by the Southaven church of Christ. “Why Should I Believe The Bible” is a tremendously profitable and pertinent theme. The oral lectures and the written material should serve to strengthen one’s faith in God’s Divine Word.

In this chapter, attention is given to the unity of the Bible. The Bible actually is a volume of sixty-six books in one Book. It contains many different situations and topics. It is not written by only one human author. The reason for noting these matters is that, if the Bible is not from God, then there should be many contradictions within its pages. Not only would there be contradictions, but these contradictions would be very obvious. Is it the case that the Bible is filled with contradictions? The answer is a resounding “no!” For years, many have tried to discredit the Bible, but not a contradiction is found within its precepts. The Bible is truly an amazing book.

Amazing Unity

Concerning the amazing unity of the Bible, consider the following words:

The Bible exhibits a unity that—on purely human terms—is quite simply inexplicable. In order to appreciate that unity, one first must come to terms with how The Book was put together. The Bible was written by more than forty different men from practically every walk of life. Nehemiah was a royal cupbearer. Peter was a fisherman. Luke was a physician. Matthew was a tax collector. Solomon was a king. Moses was a shepherd. Paul was a tentmaker. Furthermore, these men wrote from almost every conceivable human condition. David wrote from heights of joy on the rolling, grassy hills of Judea. Paul wrote from pits of despair caused by Roman incarceration. They wrote in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) from at least two continents (Europe and Asia) over a period of time that spanned approximately sixteen centuries (1500 B.C. to A.D. 100). And they covered topics as diverse as eschatology, soteriology, theology, psychology, geography, history, medicine, and many others. All this being true, one might expect that so diverse a group of men, writing on so varied a group of subjects, over such a lengthy span of time, would have produced a book that would be a tangled mishmash of subjects more often than not marred by an incredible number of inconsistencies, errors, and incongruities. Yet this hardly is the case. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The Bible exhibits such astounding harmony, such consistent flow, and such unparalleled unity that it defies any purely naturalistic explanation. It is as if the Bible were a magnificent symphony orchestrated by a single Conductor. The “musicians” each may have played a different instrument, in a different place, at a different time. But when the talented Maestro combined the individual efforts, the end result was a striking masterpiece.¹

Can the reader imagine assembling forty different writers and asking them to write about a **single** theme?

Yet the Bible has many different topics and was written by forty different men, from diverse backgrounds, unknown to one another for the most part, and over a period of sixteen hundred years! Yet the Bible contains amazing unity!

Suppose you assembled forty contemporary scholars with the highest academic training possible in a single field of study (e.g., forty academicians with terminal Ph.D. degrees in world history). Suppose, further, that you placed them in a room, and asked them to write a twenty page paper on a single topic—the causes of World War II. What kind of consensus would be exhibited when all of their treatises were completed? Likely, the forty scholars would be unable to agree on all but a few points; their compositions would be recognized more for the disagreements they contained than for the agreements. The Bible writers, by contrast, generally were not contemporaries. They worked independently, and the majority never even met another biblical writer. Most were not highly trained, and what training they did have certainly was not in the same field of study. Nor were they allowed to write on a single topic in which they already had an interest. Yet they produced a book that is unified from beginning to end. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings corroborate one another in numerous historical events. Joshua 1 verifies Deuteronomy 34. Judges 1:1 verifies Joshua 24:27-33. Ezra 1 verifies 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. Daniel refers to Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2). Ezekiel refers to Daniel (Ezekiel 28:3). And so on. This kind of unity, which is in evidence throughout the Sacred Volume, attests to the fact that there was a Superintending Intelligence behind it. So many writers, over so many years, covering so many themes, simply could not have been so harmonious by mere coincidence.²

George DeHoff wrote:

The Bible consists of sixty-six books written by about forty different men over a period of sixteen

hundred years. It was written by kings, soldiers, shepherds, farmers and fishermen. It was begun by Moses in the lonely desert of Arabia and finished by John on the Isle of Patmos. Some of it was written in kings' palaces, some in shepherds' tents, some beside still waters and part of it was written in prison. Part of the Bible was written by highly educated men and part of it was written by unlettered fishermen. It was written in different languages and different countries. Yet, when all the books of the Bible are brought together they blend into one great whole. They are a unit, hence The Book. There are no contradictions; there is no discord. It is never necessary to rewrite the Bible and bring it up to date. It is always up to date and was free of error from the beginning. These men could have written such a book only by divine guidance. Just as the materials for Solomon's temple joined perfectly together because they were prepared under the direction of a great architect, so the books of the Bible blend harmoniously because they were written under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God. When one of the world's outstanding encyclopedias was published, the publishers had to bring out an additional volume the following year to correct the errors which got into the first edition. The great scholars of the world had worked faithfully but mistakes were found just as they are found in all human productions. Skeptics have been unable to find even one error in the Bible. There are no mistakes and contradictions. It must, therefore, be that God directed its writing.³

This amazing unity is evidence of one Divine Author. If one has considered the evidence of God's existence and knows there is a God, then it is not difficult to understand that God has revealed His will to mankind and that this revelation (the Bible) is unified.

Specific Areas Of Unity Of The Bible

Having noted some of the background of the Bible, including the many different human authors, their

backgrounds, and the span of time over which the Bible was written, attention is now given to some specific areas of unity within the Bible.

Unity In Types And Antitypes

A fascinating study, though not often done, is a study of the Biblical usage of types and antitypes. The English word “type” comes from the Greek word “typos” meaning “to strike.” The “type” prefigures something that is to come later. The “antitype” is that which was prefigured by the type. There are many types and antitypes within the pages of God’s Word. The old printing press is a good illustration of the type and the antitype. A person would literally “set the type” on the press that was to be used for printing a document. As the paper went through the press, the type and ink was pressed against the paper and the impression of the type was printed onto the paper. That which was printed on the paper is the “antitype” (against the type).

The Old Testament is filled with many types. The counterparts of these types are the antitypes. In other words, the type prefigured the antitype. There must be a unity between these types and antitypes. And, indeed, there is! Without getting into the particulars of the types and antitypes, notice a few of the them. Moses was a type of Christ. Moses stated:

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken (Deut. 18:15).

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require [it] of him (Deut. 18:18-19).

Moses and Jesus were alike in many respects (lawgivers, born under decree of death, mediators, deliverers, etc.). Moses was the type, and Jesus was the antitype.

Melchizedek was a type of Christ (cf. Gen. 14; Heb. 6:20). Adam is identified as a type of Christ (1 Cor. 15:45-49). The tabernacle was a type of the church. God gave explicit instructions for Moses to build the tabernacle “according to the pattern.” Moses records, “According to all that I shew thee, [after] the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make [it]” (Exod. 25:9). Many centuries later, the Hebrews writer penned these words:

Now of the things which we have spoken [this is] the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore [it is] of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount (Heb. 8:1-5).

Many other types and antitypes could be given (such as the ark and the church, Israel’s deliverance from captivity and our deliverance from sin, the Passover lamb and Christ, Manna and Christ, etc.). All of these types and antitypes are “faith builders” in the amazing unity of the Bible. Types and antitypes are truly a fascinating study. This unity could not have been devised by man! It demonstrates a Divine source which purposed them.

Unity In Theme

While there are sixty-six books in the Bible, Wayne Jackson succinctly stated:

[T]here is a unity of theme running throughout the Word. This is wonderfully evidenced by a comparison between certain, portions of the first and last books of the Bible. For example, in Genesis the origin of the physical heavens and earth is revealed (Gen. 1:1), while in Revelation the consummation of earthly affairs sees these ending and giving place to a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1). Further, the deceiving Satan (Gen. 3:1ff) will eventually deceive no more (Rev. 20:10). Perfect man who became sinful (Gen. 3:6) will ultimately live in perfection again (Rev. 7:14; Rev. 22:14). All this is made possible by that seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), the offspring of David (Rev. 22:16), who, by virtue of sacrifice (Gen. 4:4), became an enthroned Lamb (Rev. 22:1). Thus the sorrow of Eden (Gen. 3:16) will be ended in heaven (Rev. 21:4) and that tree of life from which our early parents were separated (Gen. 3:22-24) will be our glad possession again (Rev. 22:14).⁴

Regarding “themes,” the Bible is completely different from the writings of men in their false religions. Along this line of thought, Wayne Coats wrote:

The Bible cannot be treated as if it were only one among many other sacred books. Pick up a copy of the Koran or read from the Hindu Vedas, and one thing that stands out in all these productions of mere men is the fact that they present a hodge-podge accumulation of heterogenous material without any unity, plan, or order. There is no aim, end, or purpose which points one to an ultimate fulfillment. Is this not significant? Look at the Bible and see man as he is turned out of the Paradise of God and away from the tree of life (Gen. 3:23). Every book, chapter, verse, and syllable of the grand old Book is united in presenting to wayward man the

means of being able to eat of the fruit from the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).⁵

There is a wonderful, unified theme running like a golden strain throughout the Word of God. It begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation:

Many years ago I entered the wonderful temple of God's revelation. I entered the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament Art Gallery where the pictures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and Daniel hung on the wall. I entered the music room of the Psalms where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth the dirge like wail of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah; to the grand impassioned strains of Isaiah until it seemed that every reed and harp in God's organ of nature responded to the tuneful touch of David, the sweet singer of Israel. I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes where the voice of the preacher was heard and passed into the conservatory of Sharon where the lily of the valley's sweet scented spices filled and perfumed my life. I entered the business room of the proverbs and passed into the observatory room of the prophets where I saw many telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far-off events but all concentrated upon the Bright and Morning star which was soon to rise over the moon-lit hills of Judea for our salvation. I entered the audience room of the King of Kings and caught a vision from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; I entered the Acts of Apostles where the Holy Spirit was doing His office work in the forming of the church; I passed into the correspondence room where sat Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John penning their epistles. I stepped into the Throne Room of Revelation where all towered into glittering Peaks. I got a vision of the King seated upon His throne in all His glory, and I cried:

All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of All.⁶

Unity In Monotheism

From beginning to end, the Bible teaches there is but “one God.” Under the Old Testament period, Moses penned the following: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). Likewise, in the New Testament, one reads:

[There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:4-6).

Wayne Coats observed:

Not one time does any writer even hint that Jehovah will sanction and approve of idolatry and its multiplicity of gods. On this subject, the Bible is a book of unity. Israel was condemned because they “...went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god” (Judg. 8:33). Later God said of Israel, “Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemoth the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon...I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes” (1 Kings 1:33-35). When Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper chamber and became crippled, he sent messengers to, “...inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease” (2 Kings 1:2). As a result of turning aside from God, the people were sold into slavery, and their plight begs description. In the New Testament the same idea of there being but one God is paramount, and to Him alone is man's allegiance due. To the church at Corinth Paul wrote, “...there is none other God but one. For though there be that are

called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father ..." (1 Cor. 8:4-6).⁷

Some of the enemies of the Bible would like the world to believe that man started out practicing polytheism (many gods) and finally evolved to the idea of "one God." However, it is evident that the Bible reveals the very opposite. Man started out monotheistic and later departed in polytheism.

Unity In The One Church

As one observes so-called "Christendom" today, he sees a divided situation religiously. He sincerely may ask, "If the Bible is from God and it has unity, why is there so much division religiously?" This is a valid question! Why are there so many different churches with different names, teaching different doctrines, if the Bible is from God? Does God teach conflicting and contradicting doctrines? Can all these things be from the Bible which is said to be unified?

The simple truth is that God is not the author of denominationalism (i.e., confusion; cf. 1 Cor. 14:33). The Word of God uniformly teaches there is but one church. There was but one church prophesied. Isaiah wrote:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

The reader will notice that Isaiah prophesied of "the Lord's house" (singular), not "houses." Jesus promised to build His "church" (singular), not "churches." He stated,

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The Lord added to “the church” (singular), not “churches.” Luke recorded, “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Jesus is “the Saviour” of “the body” which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 5:23).

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved “the church” and gave himself “for it” (Eph. 5:25). When the church is spoken of in the plural, it is referring to congregations and not to denominations. An example of this is seen when Paul wrote, “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

The Bible doctrine of the one church should not be surprising when one realizes that Jesus Himself prayed that all would be “one.” Just prior to His death, He prayed:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17:20-22).

The religious confusion in the world today is not the fault of the Bible. It stands as a unified Book and is consistent throughout its pages. Division comes from “without” the Bible, not from “within.”

In Opposing Error

Just as a counterfeit implies an original (authenticity), so does error imply a truth. The Word of God is “truth.” Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). God is for truth and, consequently, is against error. The Psalmist wrote:

Through thy precepts I get understanding:
therefore I hate every false way (Psm. 119:104).

Therefore I esteem all [thy] precepts
[concerning] all [things to be] right; [and] I hate
every false way (Psm. 119:128).

Jesus stated that every plant not planted by His Father
would be rooted up. He said:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their
mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but
their heart is far from me. But in vain they do
worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the
commandments of men. And he called the
multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and
understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth
defileth a man; but that which cometh out of
the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his
disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that
the Pharisees were offended, after they heard
this saying? But he answered and said, Every
plant, which my heavenly Father hath not
planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they
be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind
lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Matt.
15:8-14).

To the church at Pergamos, Jesus said:

But I have a few things against thee, because
thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of
Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a
stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to
eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit
fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the
doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate
(Rev. 2:14-15).

We must realize that Jesus hates false doctrine.
Wayne Coats observed:

There is no book like the Bible in its treatment
of the false prophet, the false teacher, and the

purveyor of error. There is a signal unity in this area from beginning to end. Moses chronicled the mind of God toward false prophets when he said, "And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death..." (Deut. 13:5). He further wrote, "The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die" (Deut. 18:20). Solomon wrote, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27). Isaiah declared, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). Jeremiah condemned the false teachers of his day by saying, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means: and my people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31). Ezekiel wrote, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks" (Ezek. 34:2)? Our Lord said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). He also said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Paul wrote, "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God" (2 Cor. 2:17). He also said, "There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision" (Tit. 1:10). In his final message to the church at Pergamos, our Lord condemned the brethren for tolerating those who held to the doctrine of Balaam and also the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. He said, "...which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14-15). It should be impressive even to the unbeliever that the theme of condemnation against error runs completely through the Bible. Indeed this is another strand in that marvelous web of unity which characterizes the Bible.⁸

Jesus stated, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth makes one free and delivers his soul from condemnation.

Consequently, the Bible uniformly condemns error which would rob man of his soul's salvation.

Conclusion

The Bible, for many reasons, is an amazing book. One of these reasons is its unity. The longer one lives and the more he studies this Divine Volume, the more he is impressed with its uniformity in teaching.

Geisler and Nix observe:

A more formal evidence of the Bible's inspiration is its unity. Composed as it is of sixty-six books, written over a period of some fifteen hundred years by about forty authors using several languages and containing hundreds of topics, it is more than accidental or incidental that the Bible possesses an amazing unity of theme—Jesus Christ. One problem—sin—and one solution—the Savior—unify its pages from Genesis to Revelation. This is an especially valid point because no one person or group of men put the Bible together. Books were added as they were written by the prophets. They were collected because they were considered inspired. It is only later reflection, both by the prophets themselves (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-11) and later generations, that has discovered that the Bible is really one book whose “chapters” were written by men who had no explicit knowledge of the overall structure. Their individual roles could be compared to that of different men writing chapters of a novel for which none of them have even an overall outline. Whatever unity the book has must come from beyond them. Like a symphony, each individual part of the Bible contributes to an overall unity that is orchestrated by one Master.⁹

Why should I believe the Bible? There are a myriad of reasons, not the least of which is “Because of Its Amazing Unity”: “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven (Psm. 119:89).

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CHAPTER 9

Because It Has Been Faithfully Preserved

Keith Mosher, Sr.

Commendation

FOR THE LAST 2,000 years, the church of Christ has faced two overwhelmingly important issues: (1) the preservation of the pure, written Word of God, and (2) the application of the latter **truth** to man. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).¹ The implications of the foregoing statements from the Christ are obvious. If **truth** were to be lost, no one could become a disciple of the Christ, and all accountable persons would have no hope for an eternal life—in fact, no one would know one thing about God nor an afterlife.

Therefore, the subject assigned to this author is as fundamental as any theme could be. Unless God has providentially preserved His Word, no truth could be secured. My thanks to B. J. Clarke for insisting that the topic of Biblical preservation be discussed and to all the brethren at Southaven for hosting the annual **POWER** Lectureship.

Those who read the material presented here also need to know that this writing would become chapter one and two in the **third** book in the series entitled **The Book God Breathed**. The first two covered, respectively,

inspiration and canonicity and are thirteen-chapter studies each. The third volume will be, God-willing, a thirteen-week study of **How We Got The English Bible**. There are few, if any, such studies available for brethren of these most vital subjects.

Introduction

It seems odd that, in several books available to the author on general Biblical introduction, which subject includes how the Bible came to its present condition, that very few of these tomes have a section on Biblical preservation. It seems that this doctrine is assumed by such writers. Geisler and Nix, whose large work on general introduction is a textbook at Memphis School of Preaching, do say:

There are four links in the chain “from God to us:” inspiration, canonization, transmission, and translation. In the first, God gave the message to the prophets who received and recorded it. Canonization, the second link, dealt with the recognition and collection of the prophetic writings. In effect, the objective disclosure was complete when the sixty-six books of the Bible were written, and then recognized by their original readers. However, in order for succeeding generations to share in this revelation the Scriptures had to be copied, translated, recopied, and retranslated. This process not only provided the Scriptures for other nations, but for other generations as well. The third link is known as transmission of the Bible.²

Bible students need to be aware, then, that, in seeking to study **preservation**, one might need to look for materials concerning the text under the heading **transmission**.

The study here will cover several areas. The first section will deal with the principles of Biblical preservation. The second section will cover the faithfulness

of the scribes in copying the ancient Old Testament manuscripts. The third section will be a study concerning the transmission of the New Testament. Section four is a technical look at the theological ramifications of the doctrine of preservation and its linkage to inspiration.

The Principles Of Bible Preservation

Persons who believe that “the original writings of the scriptures were verbally inspired by God, then of necessity...must believe they have been providentially preserved through the ages.”³ Does God preserve His inspired Word **and** to what extent? Are just the concepts kept intact, **or** did God preserve the words themselves?

Biblically, the following passages imply that God would preserve His very words: “Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the Lord” (2 Kings 10:10). This statement concerns the **precise** prophecies about the evil Ahab and his household. The psalmists also often insisted that God’s very words would be eternally kept:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever (Psm. 12:6-7).

The counsel of the Lord standeth forever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations (Psm. 33:11; cf. Psm. 19:7-9; Psm. 100:5).

Note also that God’s Word is touched by eternity: “Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psm. 119:89).

The prophets, too, implied a preserved Word: “The grass withereth, the flower faileth, but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:7-8; cf. Isa. 55:11). In fact, the greatest prophet of all, and more than a prophet, said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall

not pass away” (Matt. 24:35). Jesus also insisted that the Old Testament was verbally preserved: “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17).

It is passingly strange that some Christians, claiming to believe in a “verbally inspired” Bible, fail to believe what the above passages (and many others⁴) say about **preservation**. Why else would some brethren be willing to accept the translation theories and errors evident in many modern Bible versions, except that such brothers and sisters have failed to grasp the meaning of full inspiration? **A failure to grasp the doctrine of preservation of the very words of Scripture is the starting point for all other kinds of apostasy.** Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). If Jesus’ actual words have not been faithfully preserved, then John 12:48 is meaningless. **The first principle of the preservation of Holy Writ is that, without God’s intervention to keep His Word pure, there is no Christianity.**

In the second place, the preservation of the Scriptures originates in the eternal counsels of God: “Forever, O Lord, the word is settled in heaven” (Psm. 119:89). Why would the all-powerful One speak and then not aid man in some way to remember what is **eternally** important? The written Word is the **perfect** system for preserving truth (1 Cor. 13:10).

In the third place, the Scriptures have been preserved by God’s faithful ones. The Old Testament was preserved by the Aaronic priests and the scribes, unto whom were committed the “oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). The New Testament text has been preserved in nearly 6,000 manuscripts so that the Word cannot be manipulated.⁵

In the fourth place, note that there is **no** difference, according to the preserved text, between God's "speaking" and the scriptures' "speaking." First of all, the very fact that the term "Scripture" is used to refer to the **copies** available to the ancient peoples, and not to the original manuscripts, implies that the Old Testament text was faithfully preserved, for the first-century audience "searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). But the "scriptures" available in ancient Berea were certainly **not** the autographs or originals (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15).

Second, if the copies are called Scripture, then the very **quality** of the originals has been preserved by God. The copies are **holy** (2 Tim. 3:15), **true** (Dan. 10:21), and **cannot** be broken (John 10:35). In fact, such **faithful** copies deserve faith (John 2:22), for the faithful copies are the very voice of God.

Third, note a comparison of the following two verses:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth (Exod. 9:13-16).

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth (Rom. 9:17).

What God said to Pharaoh through Moses was exactly equivalent to what the Scripture said. Would God preserve

His statements? (Compare also Gen. 12:1-3 and Gal. 3:8; Gen. 21:10 and Gal. 4:30; etc.)

A fifth principle of Biblical preservation that is popular among evangelicals will **not** be tolerated here—i.e., that God lays on the heart of every generation which copies of the Bible are the true readings. This latter doctrine of **illumination** applies John 16:13 to all Christians rather than to the first-century apostles who received **miraculous** guidance in learning, teaching, and writing God's Word. However, the question thus arises concerning whether a copy or translation of the original can actually be said to be Scripture. Note the following passage:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut

up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power (Luke 4:16-32).

The discerning reader of the above passage who knows of **two** Old Testament Bibles available to the Jews of Jesus' day will recognize from the **word order** of Luke 4:18 that Jesus was reading from the LXX and not from the Hebraic (Hebrew-language) Biblica. The text from which the Master read was a Greek translation first made in Alexandria, Egypt about 200 B.C.⁶ But note **very** carefully that what Jesus read in that ancient translation, He called "**Scripture**" (Luke 4:21). A faithfully preserved text can be said to **be** God's Word.

Christians, in order to be assured that the translation they are using is faithful enough to the originals to be called Holy Writ, will **have** to know some of the facts about textual transmission (technically textual criticism or the science of text transmission) in order to make intelligent choices as to which modern Bible to use. But when one has a faithfully preserved text and knows that one does, great comfort in studying is discovered. How were the manuscripts, originally written on very fragile materials, preserved?

Transmission Of The Old Testament

God chose human language to transmit the message to man (Heb. 1:1). Language is precise [in contrast to visions, dreams, miracles, and creation (Psm. 19:7)]. It is possible to make more precise copies of written language than of spoken, and the written word is much more easily preserved. God chose Hebrew and Aramaic for the Old Testament and Koine (common) Greek (with a smattering of Latin, classical Greek, and Aramaic) for the New Testament.

Contrary to nineteenth century Bible critics (and other evolutionists), writing and reading developed early in man's sojourn on earth.⁷ Archaeologists have discovered many cuneiform tablets at Sumer dating to 4000 B.C., nearly 2500 years before Moses wrote the Law.⁸ The Bible references several kinds of writing. There were genealogical records (Gen. 5:1—these records are found twelve other times in Genesis); historical records (Exod. 24:4); torah (Exod. 24:4); the stone tablets (Exod. 34:27-28); words on Aaron's rod (Num. 17:2-3); and, again, the **completed** torah (Deut. 31:9). The prophets indicate that written records existed long before the Moabite Stone was made (c.a. 850 B.C.).⁹ (See Josh. 8:30-34; Josh. 18:4-9; Josh. 24:26; Judg. 8:14; 1 Sam. 10:25 and 2 Kings 1:1; 2 Kings 3:4-27.)

Writing instruments were known and used. There was the three-sided **stylus** for marking in clay (Jer. 17:1, where the English has "pen") and a **chisel** for stone inscriptions (Josh. 8:31-32). In fact, Job, living about the time of Abraham, wished that Job's words might be engraved with an "iron stylus" in rock forever (Job 19:24). The ancients used pens to write on papyrus, vellum, leather, and parchment, and cut the nib with a "pen knife" (Jer. 36:23; cf. 2 John 12). The pens were often made from quills and the ink from the lampblack or residue of an

olive oil lamp.¹⁰ How accurate those ancient scribes were is the crux of the credibility issue concerning the Old Testament.¹¹

“Until about fifty years ago, very little was known about the Hebrew text” prior to A.D. 100.¹² It is known that the Hebrew scribal tradition can be historically divided into three periods: (1) Ezra to A.D. 200, (2) Talmudic (A.D. 200-500), (3) Masoretic (A.D. 500-1500, the time of the printing press; *masorah* means “handed down” in Hebrew). The Masoretic scribes added vowel pointing to aid in the reading of the Hebrew. Modern students of the Hebrew language learn Hebrew grammar from the **Masorah**. However, consider the following:

There is much disagreement as to the origin or the text that the scribes maintained. Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891, professor of Old Testament at Gottingen) argued that all the Hebrew texts revert to one original manuscript (a single copy). He reasoned that all Masoretic manuscripts have some specific characteristics in common... By the time of Paul Kahle (1815-1964, an Old Testament professor from Oxford) several divergent types had been identified. Kahle argued that there were many vulgar texts...that were then standardized into an official text [by the Masorettes, KM]...In the mid 1950's, two other scholars, William F. Albright from Johns Hopkins University and Frank M. Cross from Harvard University, began to develop a third view, arguing for the possibility of local recensions/text types/families. This theory reduced the textual witnesses to three types from different areas: Palestine (Samaritan Pentateuch, Masoretic text of Chronicles, several Iumran texts); Babylon (Masoretic text); Egypt (Septuagint). [The Masoretic text is Hebrew; the Septuagint is Greek, KM.]¹³

Note from the above quote that the scribe “maintained” the text and that, even if there are three “families” or “text types,” they are either Masoretic

(Hebrew) or Greek (LXX). How accurate the scribes were is an amazing story, for, during a period from A.D. 20 to A.D. 200, a tradition developed (*tanna-im*) establishing **meticulous** rules for copying the Old Testament, especially for preserving the synagogue scrolls.¹⁴ The rules were as follows. (1) Only parchment made from **clean** animals could be used, and the pieces had to be joined together with thread from (ceremonially) **clean** animals. (2) Each written column of the scroll was to have no fewer than forty-eight and no more than sixty lines, whose breadth must then consist of thirty letters. (3) The page was first to be lined (with a penknife), from which lines the letters were **suspended**. (On papyrus scrolls of the Ezra period, one letter per square was written. Papyrus is sticky, and the layers together made something that resembled a checker board.) (4) The ink was black and prepared according to a strict recipe. (5) There was to be the space of a hair between each consonant (there are **no** vowels in the ancient Hebrew, just sounds), and the space of a small consonant between each word. **Also, each book had to end at exactly the right space or it was to be done over.** (6) No word nor letter could be written from memory. Scribes did make errors, **but** such errors are easily recognizable to textual critics because the ancient text is so uniform, which fact cannot be said of other ancient writings. (7) The scribe must wash himself entirely **and** be in full Jewish dress before beginning to copy the scroll. He could not talk to anyone while copying. (8) The scribe could **not** write the name YaWeH (YHWH, or, read from right to left, HWHY), transliterated “Jehovah” in English, with a used pen, even if it was newly dipped, nor take notice of anyone, even a king, while writing the sacred name. (9) No absolute Hebrew characters other than the Hebrew square script were usable. (10) The letters for the synagogue scrolls were later written in gold, and no

Sadducee, informer, proselyte, slave, woman, madman, or minor could copy a scroll to be used in the synagogue.¹⁵ There were numerous other rules, “both to preserve the scrolls from mistakes and to remind the scribe that he was copying sacred material.”¹⁶

Textual critics summarize the wonderfully accurate work of the Old Testament scribes by noting the “vowel pointing” of the Hebrew text (and any changes), any copying mistakes, and by comparing readings. External evidence from the Dead Sea scrolls and a few other ancient texts from Egypt also aid the critic. The Septuagint (Greek) from 250 B.C. is especially helpful for showing any variants from the early scribal periods, since the Hebrew text was standardized in the first century after Christ.¹⁷

Transmission Of The New Testament

As seen from above, the credibility of the Old Testament can be shown from scribal accuracy. However, the preserved New Testament text and its credibility are seen in the vast number of manuscripts available to the scientific research of textual critics. There are **no** autographs available and this is a **good** thing:

Just why God did not see fit to preserve the autographs is unknown, although man’s tendency to worship religious relics is certainly a possible determining factor (2 Kings 18:4). Others have noted that God could have avoided the worship of the originals by simply preserving a perfect copy. But, He has not seen fit to do even this. It seems more likely that God did not preserve the originals so no one could tamper with them. It is practically impossible for anyone to make changes in thousands of existing copies. The net result, however, has proved to be profitable insofar as it has occasioned the very worthwhile study of textual criticism. Another valuable side effect of not preserving the

originals is that it [the non-preservation, KM] serves as a warning to biblical scholars not to esteem paleographic, numeric, or other trivia over the essential message of the scriptures.¹⁸

There are nearly 6000 manuscripts and fragments of the New Testament available from the second century onward.¹⁹ (The second-century fragments and partial manuscripts **refute** the view of the error-prone, naturalistic critics that some New Testament books were falsified in the second century.²⁰) From the third century onward, New Testament scrolls written on vellum or parchment were preferred, but codices (books) were seemingly also known in the apostle Paul's time (2 Tim. 4:13).²¹ New Testament manuscripts eventually became very elaborate, using red ink, colored vellum, and silver letters.

In A.D. 303 Diocletian ordered all Bibles to be burned, but, in A.D. 313, Constantine announced in the Edict of Milan:

When we, Constantine Augustus, and Licinius Augustus, had happily met at Milan, and were conferring about all things which concern the advantage and security of the state, we thought that amongst other things which seemed likely to profit men generally, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention. Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired; whereby whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority..Wherefore your Dignity should know which were embodied in former orders directed to your office about the Christians; that what appeared utterly inauspicious and foreign to our clemency should be done away and that everyone of those who have a common wish to follow the religion of the Christians may from this moment freely and

unconditionally proceed to observe the same without any annoyance or disquiet.²²

The above historical event seemingly points out once again God's providence in preserving Christianity and the Bible.

Geisler and Nix list 362 New Testament **uncial** (all large-letter, printed Greek manuscripts) from the second through the tenth centuries after Christ and 245 uncial lectionaries (something akin to a responsive reading list—a collection of scripture texts grouped together for reading in public worship).²³ The rest of the New Testament manuscripts (eighty-nine per cent) are minuscule or cursive, dating from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries.²⁴ [Manuscripts are handwritten. When Geisler and Nix put out their 1986 **expanded** introduction, they listed 5,366 uncial, minuscule, and lectionary manuscripts. Today (2005), nearly 6000 is the number.]²⁵

Of what importance are all these manuscripts in terms of preservation? When there are variant readings in New Testament copies, textual critics can, by comparison and correlation of the manuscripts, determine what is the true and original reading.²⁶ How did these variants occur? The copyist made a mistake by omitting a word or letter, by repeating a word or letter, by transposing words or letters, by other confusions of insertions (some deliberate—e.g., John 5:4 and 1 John 5:7). The textual critic can correct such mistakes and, since the invention of the printing press, no such copyist's error is a problem.

A textual critic, when comparing ancient manuscripts, will always look for the more difficult reading, if it is sensible, for scribes tended (if they made a mistake) to simplify. Also, a textual critic will tend to adopt a shorter reading, because, if the scribe erred, he would generally add to the text. If there is already a **known** reading, the textual critic, when examining a newly discovered manuscript, can compare its readings to what

is an absolute text. As a last resort, the textual critic may have to resort to “intrinsic probability,” which is relying on the subjective as to what the scribe is likely to have done. Because of the scientific approach of textual criticism, one scholar was able to say that the real work of the modern textual approach has to be concerned with only “a thousandth part of the text.”²⁷

If one compares the accuracy of the preservation of the New Testament with the transmissional accuracy of other ancient texts, the integrity of the New Testament text is even more fully appreciated. For example, the extant copies of Homer’s **Iliad** number 643.²⁸ (Both the **Iliad** and the New Testament have undergone textual criticism. The **Iliad** has 15,600 lines and the New Testament has 20,000.²⁹) Only **40** words in the New Testament are still questioned, but **764 lines** of the **Iliad** are questioned.³⁰ The **Iliad** is corrupt in 5 percent of its text, but the New Testament text has less than one-half of one percent needing emending.³¹ Who questions the **Iliad**? Yet multitudes try to argue that the New Testament has “many errors.” Wegner observes:

It is important . . . to note that the verbal agreement between various New Testament manuscripts is closer than between many English translations of the New Testament and that the actual number of variants in the [Greek, KM] New Testament is small...none of which call into question any major doctrine.³²

Theological Ramifications

There are always, of course, challenges to those who defend, or attempt to defend, the Bible’s accuracy. The modernist conceives that:

If the New Testament writings arose in the course of a particular history and are witnesses

and documents of that history, then a question presents itself to us: why should our science... deal with these writings? The answer is, because they alone belong to the canon... But when once we strike out the doctrine of inspiration, the dogmatic conception of the canon can no longer be maintained.³³

The modernist must overthrow the doctrine of inspiration in order to classify New Testament writings in the **same** category as all other ancient materials. Wrede, who penned the foregoing quote, further insisted that the New Testament writings “must not be considered as ‘canonical’” but “only that appertaining to primitive Christianity.”³⁴ Christians can challenge the modernist by using a knowledge of preservation and questioning why other ancient documents are not nearly so accurately transmitted. Hastings wrote:

It is true that no book either of the New Testament or of the Old was born with the predicate, “canonical.” But...(the books) were born with the qualities which **caused** [emp. mine throughout, KM) them to be labeled “canonical.”³⁵

A second theological discussion surrounding preservation is that “progress in knowledge is progress in accuracy of description and definition.”³⁶ This latter-day arrogance among scholars is that “science” today outlaws God, the Bible, and faith in general. When applied to the Bible, the evolutionary dogma is that the Old Testament was **crude, vague, and mythical**,³⁷ and the writers were instinctive, not inspired. [Why, then, did those ancient communities **know** to preserve the scrolls in such meticulous ways (cf. Exod. 25:21)?] The by-product of an evolutionary approach to Scripture is that the Bible must be made “relevant” and its teachings “restricted” to ethics,

but, even then, differences must be allowed because of the times in which one lives. But a **preserved** Word of God claims authority (John 12:48) and, a-priori, why is there a preserved text that was written for the first century and for no other age?

In the third place, some modernists are now trying to say that the true text is not found in the mass of manuscripts, for no one ever quotes a Bible verse that says so.³⁸ Such advocates note that, "Although they accuse other textual critics of rationalism, their argument for preservation via the majority has only a rational basis not a biblical one."³⁹ The argument for preservation, however, does involve a bibliological basis (Matt. 24:35). God's Word will **never** pass away, and, historically, scribal accuracy and a huge number of manuscript witnesses have been the means by which the Bible has been preserved. May one, then, logically conclude that God did such?

A fourth challenge to the doctrine of preservation is that it is wrong-headed to think that "the exact words of the text" must be preserved at all.⁴⁰ Such a view makes a major mistake. On one occasion Jesus used the **preserved** tense of a verb to make an argument with the Sadducees:

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in

heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine (Matt. 22:23-33).

Note carefully that Jesus insisted that God said, “I **am** the God of Abraham” (Matt. 22:32). When God said that “I am” Abraham’s God, that patriarch had been dead for a millennium (Exod. 3:6; Exod. 3:16). But, God did **not** say He **was** Abraham’s God, nor He **would be**, but “I am.” Therefore, Abraham was **still living** and, if God could keep Abraham’s soul alive, it would be no problem for Deity to resurrect that ancient one. If the ancient text had not had the words “I am” faithfully preserved, Jesus could have made **no** argument.⁴¹ In fact, many of the New Testament writers made arguments and drew conclusions based on the preserved wording of the Old Testament (e.g. Matt. 1:22-23; Gal. 3:16; et al.).

Some, in the fifth place, challenge the doctrine of preservation by arguing that “it was not a doctrine of the ancient church, and that in fact it was not stated in any creed until the seventeenth century (in the Westminster confession of 1646).”⁴² But, the Bible still teaches the doctrine of preservation (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:23-25) and, because no creed mentioned the teaching until 1700 years later, may very well show how little attention was being paid to God’s Word by denominational persons.

Conclusion

The Biblical text contains hundreds of verses concerning the fact that God’s Word is **forever** settled in heaven (Psm. 119:89). When the ancient scribes sat down to copy the Old Testament scrolls, they held in high esteem—yes, reverence—the text they were writing. They

followed strict rules, and those manuscripts available are amazing witnesses to their accuracy, so much so that scientific criticism can study those manuscripts and find the original.

The New Testament evidence is vast, counting nearly 6000 Greek manuscripts. (Not included are nearly 37,000 Biblical quotes from the early church “fathers” that aid in establishing the text.) Textual critics are not in doubt about ninety-nine plus percent of the text of the Gospels, Acts, the epistles, and Revelation.

Although modernists challenge the doctrine of preservation, they seem to have a problem they never consider. For, they are challenging the best-preserved book on the planet, and they never seem able to realize the peculiarity of their positions. God’s Word shall never pass away (Matt. 24:35). The critics of the Bible, however, have died out in every generation.

Endnotes

1 **The Holy Bible**, King James Version (World Bible Publishers). All Scripture references are to this version, unless otherwise stipulated.

2 Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix, **General Introduction To The Bible: Revised And Expanded** (Chicago: Moody, 1986), p. 321.

3 John Burgon, quoted in Jack Moorman, **O Timothy**, Vol. 9, Issue 8 (1992).

4 For example, see John 10:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Daniel 10:21; Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:29; Matthew 26:54; Mark 14:49; Mark 15:28; Luke 4:21; Luke 4:24; Luke 4:27; Luke 24:32; Luke 24:45; John 2:22; John 5:39; John 7:38; John 7:42; John 13:18; John 17:12; John 19:24; John 19:36-37; John 20:9; Acts 1:16; Acts 8:32; Acts 8:35; Acts 17:2-11; Acts 18:24; Romans 4:3; Romans 9:17; Romans 10:11; Romans 11:2; Romans 15:4; Romans 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8; Galatians 3:22; Galatians 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; James 2:8; James 2:23; James 4:5; 1 Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 3:16; etc.

5 Geisler & Nix, pp. 386-408. See point two in the essay for a more detailed discussion of the scribal activity.

6 *Ibid*, p. 41.

7 Paul D. Wegner, **The Journey From Texts To Translation** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), p. 30.

8 Geisler & Nix, p. 331.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid, p. 336.

11 Ibid, p. 338.

12 Wegner, p. 166.

13 Ibid, pp. 161-170.

14 Ibid, p. 171.

15 Ibid, p. 172.

16 Ibid.

17 Bible students can find information on the Hebrew manuscripts available to textual critics from the ninth and tenth centuries (A.D.); Dead Sea scrolls; Samaritan Pentateuch; Nash Papyrus; Murabba'at manuscripts; Mosada manuscripts; Genizah fragments; and the codices in any good general Biblical introduction book.

18 Geisler & Nix, pp. 43-44.

19 Wegner, p. 208.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Geisler & Nix, p. 385.

24 Ibid. These manuscripts provide the text for the King James Version or the so-called Received Text.

25 Ibid., p. 387. Students who have the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament can read about the catalogued manuscripts in the introduction.

26 Critics count **6000** variants in the Masoretic Old Testament, but most are matters of **spelling**. 1900 of those variants agree with the LXX. However, critics count **200,000** variants in the extant New Testament manuscripts. The figure is misleading, for, if one word is misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts, the error is counted 3,000 times. There are fewer than a handful of errors in the manuscripts (copyist's mistakes) and not **one** is a theological problem.

27 James Stevenson, **A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating The History Of The Church** (London: W.H.C. Frend, 1987), pp. 284-85.

28 A. T. Robertson, **An Introduction To The Textual Criticism Of The New Testament** (Nashville: Broadman, 1925), p. 22.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. Fewer words in the New Testament are still questioned since 1986. The term "daily" in the model prayer,

which was thought not to exist in ancient Greek, was discovered on a woman's shopping list when Pompeii was uncovered.

32 Wegner, p. 215. Note to the reader: Both Wegner and Geisler & Nix detail the names and locations of the known manuscripts. Since the Greek manuscripts number nearly 6000, scholars who argue for a "majority text" only count them. There are nearly 10,000 **Latin** manuscripts, however, and, if they were counted, then the modern translations would be "better" than the King James Version because the Greek manuscripts (from which the Latin were developed) and those behind modern translations are similar. Therefore, the doctrine of preservation does **not** extend to translation, but to the protection of the accuracy of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Preservation is a necessary corollary of inspiration. However, as shown in the text here, **accurate** translation is Scripture.

33 W. Wrede, "Bible," **Encyclopedia Of Religion And Ethics**, Vol. 2, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1961), pp. 576-77.

34 Ibid, p. 577.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid, p. 579.

37 Ibid.

38 "Inspiration, Preservation and New Testament Criticism," <http://www.bible.org>, p. 9.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid, p. 10.

41 Those who favor the loose, modern translations may want to consider the doctrine of preservation. Does God want translation to be faithful to the original, or not?

42 <http://www.Bible.org>, p. 11.

CHAPTER 10

Because It Tells Me Where I Came From

Brad Harrub

Introduction

W*HERE DID I COME* from?" Five common English words, when composed in that sequential order, pose the ultimate question. Philosophers have speculated for millennia about the origin of man. But even with thousands of years of speculation and theorizing, there remain only two basic answers. Either we arrived here by chance—merely as “lucky” by-products of some evolutionary process. Or there is an Almighty Creator. No gray area exists in the solution to this question. Either God played a role in the creation of man, or man invented God through millions of years of evolution and imagination.

The answer to this single question impacts all other questions that can be asked regarding the status of man. For, truly, if there is no Almighty Creator, then questions pertaining to salvation, eternal life, forgiveness, the church, happiness, the Bible, etc. are all irrelevant. Whereas, if it can be determined that there is a God, then these questions take on a whole new importance. The reality of a Divine Creator would indicate that man was created with a reason—by an Intelligent Designer. It also would mean that we were put here with a purpose and that we will be accountable. However, the notion of accountability is not

very palatable to individuals who have stiffened their necks and are now embracing humanism.

As a result of such rebellion against a Creator, school textbooks are actively promoting that man is simply an animal that evolved from earthworms, bacteria, or some primordial soup. While you may find the concept of men evolving from some primordial soup or bacteria repulsive or sickening, the reality of the current political climate is far worse. For in our country, the **only** theory about man's origins allowed in the classroom is this fallacious concept of organic evolution: amoeba to man. And although our country declared its independence with these words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are **created** equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (emp. mine here and in Scripture references throughout, BH), we now live in a land where we can no longer discuss that Creator in the classroom. When Thomas Jefferson penned those famous words, he illustrated that, from the very beginning, America recognized human life as a gift of God, not something created by government.

Have you ever stopped to consider what happens when generation after generation is taught that men arrived here by random chance, and that we merely evolved out of some primordial soup? What value do we place on human life when we take the creation of man away from God, and place it firmly in the hands of the evolutionary apelike ancestors that adorn the walls of so many science classrooms?

This constant inundation that life was a "lucky break" and that humans just evolved their way to the top of the animal chain is breeding an atmosphere in which many view themselves as equal (or better) than God. Jeremy Rifkin commented on the rebellious attitude of those who have abandoned any notion of a God:

We no longer feel ourselves to be guests in someone else's home and therefore obliged to make our behavior conform with a set of pre-existing cosmic rules. It is our creation now. We make the rules. We establish the parameters of reality. We create the world, and because we do, we no longer feel beholden to outside forces. We no longer have to justify our behavior, for we are now the architects of the universe. We are responsible to nothing outside ourselves, for we are the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever.¹

Since the beginning of mankind, Satan has strived daily to persuade us to believe that we are God (cf. Gen. 3:5). In fact, deification of self is the central message of the New Age Movement. For instance, in her book **Out On A Limb**, Shirley MacLaine told of her discussions with a friend by the name of Kevin Ryerson, who allegedly was able to “channel” John—a disembodied spirit from the days of Christ’s earthly sojourn. Once when MacLaine was speaking with “John,” he allegedly said to her, “[Y]our soul is a metaphor for God...**You** are God. **You** know you are divine.”² In addressing what she refers to as her “higher self” in her book **Dancing In The Light**, MacLaine said:

I am God, because all energy is plugged in to the same source. We are each aspects of that source. We are all part of God. We are individualized reflections of the God source. God is us and we are God.³

When Shirley MacLaine stands on the sands of the beach and yells out loud, “I am God,” she literally means just what she says! But such a concept is not inherent in the Biblical statement that mankind has been created in the “image and likeness of God.” God’s Word does not indicate that He created men and women in His **essence**, but in His **image** (Gen. 1:26). Only God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. God revealed this truth

when He said to the king of Tyre through Ezekiel, “You say, ‘I am a god, and sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,’ yet, **you are a man and not a god**” (Ezek. 28:2). In the Bible, only the wicked elevate themselves to the status of Deity. King Herod flirted with self-deification—and died in a horrific manner as a result. Luke reported the event as follows:

So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not the voice of a man!” Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten of worms and died (Acts 12:21-23).

Somewhere along the way, in assuming the role of God, man forgot what the Bible teaches regarding the origin of man. We should believe that the Bible, God’s Word, definitely and definitively records the origin of mankind.

“Either...Or,” Not “Both...And”

Were Christians to be made aware of the logical implications of believing their existence was merely a cosmological accident, I am convinced that most would quickly abandon such a belief. The problem appears to be that many Christians are not aware that it is an “either...or” situation when it comes to man’s origins—not a “both...and.” That dichotomy is the topic of the material that follows.

It would take a veritable encyclopedia to list the many contradictions between evolutionary theory and the Genesis account of man’s origins. While it is impossible to discuss each, I would like to offer the following list, which has been combined from a variety of sources.^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10}

1. The Genesis narrative states that light existed before the Sun was made (Gen. 1:3; Gen. 1:16), while evolution contends that the Sun was Earth’s first light.

2. Moses declared that the waters existed before dry land ever appeared (Gen. 1:2; Gen. 1:6; Gen. 1:9). Evolution alleges that Earth's first waters gradually seeped out of its interior to form the vast oceans.

3. Scripture teaches that the first biological forms of life upon the Earth were plants (Gen. 1:11), whereas evolution argues that the initial life forms were marine organisms.¹¹

4. The Bible teaches that fruit-bearing trees existed before fish were created (Gen. 1:11; Gen. 1:20), but evolution contends that fish evolved long before fruit-bearing trees.¹²

5. Genesis states that plants came into being before the sun was made (Gen. 1:11; Gen. 1:14ff), whereas evolution suggests that the sun was burning millions of years before the first plants.

6. Moses taught that birds were made on the fifth day of the creation week, and that "creeping things" (which would include both insects and reptiles) were brought into existence on the sixth day (Gen. 1:21; Gen. 1:24); evolution asserts that birds developed long after both insects and reptiles.¹³

7. The Genesis account reveals that living creatures were created according to individual groups, and, thereafter, each reproduced after its own "kind" (Gen. 1:11-12; Gen. 1:21; Gen. 1:24-25). According to evolutionary theory, all living organisms derive from a common, primitive life-source.¹⁴

8. The Biblical record teaches that man was fashioned from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7; Gen. 3:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 5:1), but evolution suggests that humans ultimately descended from apelike creatures.

9. The Bible teaches that the first humans were made with distinctive sexual characteristics—male and female (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 2:22; Matt. 19:4); evolution

suggests that sexes “evolved” approximately two billion years ago in a process that “must have been agonizingly slow.”¹⁵

10. The Bible is plain in its teaching that mankind has existed on Earth “from the beginning of the creation” (Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; Rom. 1:20), thus virtually “from the foundation of the world” (Isa. 40:21; Luke 11:50-51). Conversely, evolutionists teach that man is a “Johnny-come-lately” to the planet:

Imagine that the history of the world is represented by a clockface, say, then the appearance of ‘blue green’ bacteria in the record happened at about two o’clock, while invertebrates appeared at about ten o’clock, and mankind, like Cinderella suddenly recalling the end of the ball, at about one minute to midnight.¹⁶

11. Genesis declares that man was appointed to exercise dominion over “every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28), but evolution argues that multiplied millions of creatures already had lived and become extinct eons before man ever set foot upon the Earth, hence before he had opportunity to have dominion over them.

12. Moses affirmed that God’s work of creation was “finished” with the completion of the sixth day (Gen. 2:1-2). Evolution, on the other hand, requires that some sort of creative process has continued, hammering out new forms of living organisms across the many eons of time since life first began. The famous Harvard evolutionist, Kirtley F. Mather, wrote that evolution is:

not only an orderly process, it is a continuing one. Nothing was finished on any seventh day; the process of creation is still going on. The golden age for man—if any—is in the future, not in the past.¹⁷

13. The Word of God teaches that man has a soul that will live forever (1 Cor. 15:35-58); evolution teaches that man is wholly mortal:

The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.¹⁸

The spiritual aspects of the life of man are just as surely a product of the processes called evolution as are his brain and nervous system.¹⁹

14. Adam, according to the Bible, was to name the animals (Gen. 2:19); evolutionary geologists contend that most of the animals were extinct long before man appeared on Earth.

15. Genesis 1:31 records that God surveyed everything He had created and called it “very good.” Evolutionists claim that most of these things did not even survive to that point, and the groaning world that did survive until man’s appearance was far from perfect.

16. The Genesis account speaks of the early Earth as having been designed specifically for man’s habitation; evolutionary theory postulates an early Earth endowed with a reducing atmosphere that provided no free oxygen.

17. The Bible speaks of mankind as being created with a moral nature (Gen. 1:26-27); according to evolution, mankind is by nature amoral. Famed British evolutionist Richard Dawkins commented: “You are for nothing. You are here to propagate your selfish genes. There is no higher purpose in life.”²⁰

18. The Scriptures portray early civilizations as producing sophisticated musical instruments (Gen. 4:21) and refining alloys (Gen. 4:22), as well as building such structures as the ark of Noah (Gen. 6:14-16) and the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:3-6). Evolution, contrariwise, presents early man as primitive and technologically immature—nothing more

than a long-armed, club-carrying, apelike creature that lived in a cave.

19. According to Genesis, Adam was endowed with language from the first day of his creation; evolutionary theory postulates that language evolved slowly over long periods of time as man struggled to develop means of communication.

20. The Biblical record is clear that Adam's responsibility was to tend the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9; Gen. 2:15-16); Cain, his son, was a farmer by occupation (Gen. 4:2). Evolutionary theory, however, asserts that agriculture developed late in man's history.²¹

21. Throughout Scripture, there are events that God has orchestrated (e.g., the Flood, the long day of Joshua, et al.) that cannot be called in any sense of the word "uniformitarian" in nature. Yet one of the cardinal tenets of evolutionary dogma (and the one that is the foundation of almost all evolution-based dating systems) is uniformitarianism. Geologist Charles Felix wrote:

Uniformitarianism is the great underlying principle of modern geology!...
Uniformitarianism endures, partly because it seems reasonable and the principle is considered basic to other fields of study, but it also persists because **this is the only way to arrive at the enormous time-frame required for placement of slow evolutionary processes.** It is probably correct to state that evolution depends on the unqualified acceptance of Uniformitarianism!²²

22. According to Genesis, the creation took place in six literal, 24-hour days; evolution is alleged to have taken place over billions of years.

The evolutionary theory of man's origin stands in stark contrast to the Biblical account. If we do not accept that God created the heavens, the Earth, and man in 6

literal days, then we are making Jesus Christ—our Savior—a liar. Jesus stated, “But from the beginning of the Creation male and female he made them” (Mark 10:6), affirming that Adam and Eve were on the Earth since the beginning of creation. Paul affirmed in Romans 1:20-21 that the things God made had been “perceived” even “since the creation of the world.” According to evolutionists, man did not come into the picture until about 3-4 million years ago. It does not take a rocket-scientist to figure out that, if the Earth is supposedly 4.5 billion years old, then the last 3-4 million is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning.” Rather, it is “from the end.” Therefore we are left with a choice. Either Jesus Christ lied, and the evolutionists are correct, or we can believe that the words Jesus Christ spoke are true, and, therefore, evolution is wrong.

Ah, but you say, Adam was just a mythological creature. We know today that man originated from a Neanderthal-type creature. However, if this is true, then why did the inspired apostle Paul pen these words, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22), and, then, in reference to Christ, write, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45)? If Adam and Eve are merely mythological, does this mean that this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ, was a mythological creature, too? Anyone who identifies themselves as a Christian must surely realize that wearing the name “Christian” would not allow for room to believe that man is the product of chance. Indeed, the Bible correctly teaches us that man is different—that we were made in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).

In His Image And Likeness

When Moses wrote of man’s creation in the “image of God,” he did indeed “separate him from the rest of the

creation.” In fact, Moses’ entire discussion appears in the context of man being different from animals. As Morris correctly observed:

[M]an was to be more than simply a very complex and highly organized animal. There was to be something in man which was not only quantitatively greater, but qualitatively distinctive, something not possessed in any degree by the animals...[T]here can be little doubt that the “image of God” in which man was created must entail those aspects of human nature which are not shared by animals—attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and, above all, the capacity for worshiping and loving God.²³

It is apparent from the text of Genesis 1 and 2 that the creation of man differed markedly from that of all other life on Earth in at least the following ways.

1. A “Divine conference” preceded the forming of man. God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Such is never said of animals. As Feinberg noted:

[M]an is the apex of all creation. Man’s creation by God comes as the last and highest phase of God’s creative activity...Now there is counsel or deliberation in the Godhead. No others can be included here, such as angels, for none has been even intimated thus far in the narrative. Thus the creation of man took place not by a word alone, but as the result of a divine decree.²⁴

2. Man’s creation was unique in that God “breathed life” into him (Gen. 2:7). As James Orr wrote in his classic text, **God’s Image In Man**:

The true uniqueness in man’s formation, however, is expressed by the act of the divine inbreathing...This is an act peculiar to the

creation of man; no similar statement is made about the animals. The breath of Jehovah imparts to man the life which is his own, and awakens him to conscious possession of it.²⁵

3. The sexes of mankind were not created simultaneously, as in the case of the animals. Rather, the first female was “built” from a section of the first male’s flesh and bone.

4. Unlike animals, mankind is not broken down into species (i.e., “according to their kind” or “all kinds of”), but instead is designated by sexuality. God created them **male and female**.

5. The Psalmist (Psm. 8:5) spoke of man as being created a little lower than the angels (*elohiym*, ASV “God”). As Keil and Delitzsch put it in their commentary on Psalms:

According to Genesis 1:27 man is created in the image of God; he is a being in the image of God, and, therefore,...since he is only a little less than divine, he is also only a little less than angelic.²⁶

Leupold, in his **Exposition Of Genesis**, commented: “Man is not only made after the deliberate plan and purpose of God but is also very definitely patterned after Him.”²⁷ The Psalmist’s point was that man, because he bears the image of God, is indeed “patterned after Him.”

6. Finally, the text of Genesis 1 explicitly states that **mankind alone** was created in the image of God. Nowhere is such a statement made about the rest of Earth’s life forms.

Unlike the other creatures that God created, man alone bears a special resemblance to Him. Of all the living beings that dwell on planet Earth, one solitary creature was made “in the image of God.” What is it that composes the critical essence of man that distinguishes him from all of creation, and what are the ramifications of this distinction? Consider these differences:

1. Man is capable of speaking and communicating rational thoughts—something no animal has been able to do.
2. Man can write, improve his education, accumulate knowledge, and build on past achievements.
3. Man is creative.
4. Closely related to man’s creative ability is his gift of reasoning.
5. A fifth characteristic included in the “image of God” is man’s free-will capacity to make rational choices.
6. Only man has the ability to choose between right and wrong.
7. Man possesses a conscience.
8. Like God, man can experience heartfelt emotions.
9. Man alone possesses a unique, inherent religious inclination; he has both the desire and the ability to worship.
10. Finally, and very likely most important, is the fact that man bears the spiritual imprint of God due to the fact that he possesses an immortal soul.

The Bible is able to provide explanations for these differences that exist between man and the animals. Evolution cannot. Obviously, the Bible should be believed because **it does** reveal the true origin and purpose of man.

Conclusion

There are numerous ways in which mankind bears God’s image. For example, only human beings have a yearning to know a **cause** for things. Only humans are concerned with their **origin**, their present **purpose**, and their **destiny**. No animal—regardless of how “close” to humans certain evolutionists think that animal may be—ever pondered such things. Also, only human beings contemplate death, practice funeral rituals, and bury their dead. God has indeed “placed eternity” in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). Human civilizations from time immemorial have

believed in life after death, and, therefore, have attempted to make some plans for it. One look at the Egyptian pyramids is evidence aplenty of this fact. Additionally, only humans are historical beings. We record past events, recount them, discuss them, and even learn from them. And so on.

The Bible paints a picture of man as a being who stands on a different level from all other creatures upon the Earth. He towers high above all earthly creation because of the phenomenal powers and attributes that God Almighty has freely given him. No other living being was given the capacities and capabilities, the potential and the dignity, that God instilled in each man and woman. Humankind is the peak, the pinnacle, the crown, the apex of God's creation. And what a difference that should make in our lives! As Poe and Davis put it:

Whether people are an aspect of God or creatures of God has profound implications for human existence on earth. If people are the result of the creative activity of God based on God's intentional, self-conscious decision to make people, then creation results from the purpose of God. People have a purpose, and this purpose emerges from the Creator-creature relationship. If, on the other hand, people are aspects of a...unity of which all things are a part, but which lacks self-consciousness, then life has no purpose. It merely exists.²⁸

Whether we are created in the image and likeness of God does indeed have "profound implications for human existence." Anthropologist Jonathan Marks made the following statement in his book, **What It Means To Be 98% Chimpanzee: "The question of who and what you are is not trivial"** (emp. mine, BH). The context in which he made that statement, however, is as important as the statement itself. Here from his book are the comments immediately preceding that sentence:

Science gives us authoritative ideas about kinship, which force us to reconceptualize our place in the order of things, which is by that very fact disorienting. But it doesn't stick around to explain it to us, to reintegrate us, to give new meaning to our existence. That's the problem with Darwinian theory, of course. It tells us our ancestors were kin to apes, the products of eons of ordinary biological processes of survival and reproduction, and not merely zapped into existence in the Garden of Eden, but it doesn't tell us what that means or what to do about it. It just walks away from the wreckage.²⁹

What "wreckage," exactly, is Dr. Marks talking about? Let Richard Dawkins, the renowned evolutionist of Oxford University, answer. In the 1989 edition of his highly acclaimed 1976 book, **The Selfish Gene**, Dawkins wrote:

My own feeling is that a human society based simply on the gene's laws of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live. But unfortunately, however much we may deplore something, it does not stop it being true.³⁰

Six years later, in his book, **River Out Of Eden**, he continued in the same vein:

[I]f the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies...are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in its intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.³¹

Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg referred to a similar “pitiless indifference” in his classic book on the origin of the universe, **The First Three Minutes**, when he lamented:

It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but that we were somehow built in from the beginning...It is very hard to realize that this all is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile universe... [which] has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.³²

The “Darwinian wreckage” that has been foisted on humanity has caused untold sorrow. If we teach people that they have **descended** from animals, why would it surprise us that they then **act** like animals? If we convince people that they live in a “pointless” universe where their lives are filled with “pitiless indifference,” why should we be at all surprised when they **spend** their lives in a fruitless search for an ever-elusive happiness, and **end** their lives (sometimes intentionally!) in complete and utter despair?

Man did not evolve from an “imageless” lower creation. Rather, God created him with the unique abilities discussed above. While, in some aspects, man is very different from the infinite God Who created him, the passages of Scripture that speak of the *imago Dei* reveal his likeness to Him. Thus, we are justified in concluding that man was created “**to be and do on a finite level what God was and did on an infinite level**”³³ (emp. added). How very thrilling, and yet how extremely humbling, to know that we alone bear God’s image! And,

yes, what a profound difference such knowledge should make in our lives!

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the Earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Think for just a moment about the changes in attitudes we would see in our young people if they grew up with those words scrolled across the top of classroom chalkboards for them to read every single school day. As humans, we must recognize that human life is a gift from God—the Giver of life. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7; cf. Acts 17:28). The next question then becomes, what will we do with that gift?

Endnotes

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- 6 Basil Overton, **Evolution In The Light Of Scripture, Science, And Sense** (Winona, MS: Choate, 1981), pp. 117-18.
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13 Fortey, pp. 222-37, 261-88.

14 Sagan, pp. 30-31, & Ridley, pp. 21-22.

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23 Henry M. Morris, **The Genesis Record** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), p. 74.

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28 Harry Lee Poe & Jimmy H. Davis (2000), **Science And Faith** (Nashville: Broadman & Holman), p. 128.

29 Jonathan Marks, **What It Means To Be 98% Chimpanzee** (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2002), p. 222 (emp. in original).

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CHAPTER 11

Because It Tells Me What I Am Doing Here

David B. Watson

Introduction

ALL COURTROOMS HAVE HAD liars testify on the witness stands. Why, then, do judges still allow men to come into their court rooms and tell their own stories? Because not all men are liars. Some men tell the truth. And it is upon the basis of truth, told by honest men, that justice is done. Thus, every man is allowed to testify and set forth his own case in court. But it is understood that his testimony will not be accepted as truth without adequate supporting evidence.

Let us assume that the Bible is on the witness stand to tell its own story. You are asking, “Why should I believe the Bible?” One of the claims made by the Bible is that it tells me what I am doing here. Is that true? It is understood that this claim will not be accepted as true without adequate supporting evidence. Is there such evidence? We will investigate by examining (1) The Confusion Of Sinners; (2) The Claims Of Scripture; (3) The Conclusion Of Solomon; and (4) The Commandments Of The Savior.

The Confusion Of Sinners

Several years ago **USA Today** conducted an interesting survey by asking the following question: “If

you could get in contact with God directly, ask a question, and get an immediate reply—what would you ask?” The number one question people wanted to ask God was, “What is my purpose here?”

One major reason people do not know what they are doing here is because of the teaching of atheistic evolution. Richard Dawkins, a British scientist who has described himself as “a fairly militant atheist, with a fair degree of active hostility toward religion,”¹ has authored a book entitled **The Selfish Gene** in which he gives his explanation of human existence. He said, “You are for nothing. You are here to propagate your selfish genes. There is no higher purpose to life.”² George Gaylord Simpson, one of America’s leading advocates of evolution, has written in his book entitled **The Meaning Of Evolution:**

Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the workings of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolute ethical criteria of right and wrong.³

Evolutionists do not know where they have come from, they do not know where they are going, and, thus, they do not know what they are doing here.

The Claims Of Scripture

There are three quality questions that the Bible claims to answer. First, where did I come from? The Bible claims that life is a gift from God. Paul preached that “he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25).⁴ Second, what am I doing here? The Bible claims that God’s “divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life” (2 Pet. 1:3). Such would include an answer to the question concerning the purpose of life. Third, where am I going? The Bible claims concerning the cursed, “these

shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). If life is a gift from God, and if there is an eternal hell for the rebellious and an eternal heaven for the righteous, then the way we answer the question of what we are doing here will determine our eternal destiny.

In order to properly understand the purpose of our own existence, we must also understand the following: (1) The Purpose Of The Creator; (2) The Purpose Of the Creation; (3) The Purpose Of The Christ; (4) The Purpose Of The Commandments; (5) The Purpose Of The Church; and then (6) The Purpose Of The Creature (Man).

The Purpose Of The Creator

Paul wrote to the Romans, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). The word for “purpose” means “a setting forth of a thing, placing of it in view.”⁵ Other passages to read and study would include:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth (purposed—DBW) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God (Rom. 3:24-25).

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:9-11).

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9-11).

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

From these passages we learn that God, in eternity, before the world began, set before Himself the plan/scheme of redemption. We learn that this plan/scheme of redemption involves God's gracious offer of justification, redemption, remission of sins, and salvation through Jesus Christ in the church of Christ by the Gospel of Christ. Paul says that, for those who love God and are the called according to His purpose, everything works together for their good and God's glory.

The Purpose Of The Creation

God's physical creation also has a purpose:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race (Psm. 19:1-5).

From these verses we learn that the created heavens/firmament, earth/world declare and show the glory and

handiwork of God. Such is manifested day and night throughout all the earth and unto the end of the world. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Paul also declared:

that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20).

The Purpose Of The Christ

Paul outlines how God's purpose is accomplished in Christ through (1) God's foreknowledge; (2) God's predestination; (3) God's calling; (4) God's justification; and (5) God's glorification:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:29-30).

The word "foreknowledge" means "the possession of information concerning an event prior to its occurrence, knowledge in advance, knowledge of the future."⁶ Other passages (where this word is also used) that should be read and studied include the following:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:2).

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Pet. 1:20).

From these passages we learn that Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us. We learn that by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Christ was delivered, taken, crucified, and slain. We further learn that, through the grace of God and through the Christ and His sacrifice, we can become elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Purpose Of The Commandments

The word for “predestinate” (Rom. 8:30) means “to predetermine, decide beforehand...to foreordain, appoint beforehand.” Other passages (where this word is also used) that should be read and studied include:

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained (predestinated—DBW) before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely

given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:6-13).

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:5).

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11).

From these passages we learn that God predetermined that, to become one of the elect, a person must be conformed to the image of His Son. We further learn that, to that end, men were/are called. We also learn that God ordained, before the world, to issue the call by means of the revelation of the wisdom and mystery of God made known through the Holy Spirit-inspired words of the Gospel/will of Christ. And we finally learn that those answering this call were/are predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ according to His will and that they have, as God's children, an inheritance according to God's purpose and will.

The word for "called" (Rom. 8:30) means "to be called...invited." Other passages (where this word is also used) to read and study include:

Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:6-7).

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours (1 Cor. 1:2).

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called (Jude 1).

From these passages we learn that God calls men by the Gospel and hath from the beginning chosen the called to salvation through belief of the truth. We learn that God saves and calls with an holy calling according to His own purpose and grace which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began. We learn that the called of Jesus Christ are saints, sanctified by God the Father through the Holy Spirit and preserved in Jesus Christ to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word for “justified” (Rom. 8:30) means “to declare, pronounce one to be just, righteous.” Alexander Campbell ascribed justification to seven causes.⁷ He wrote: “It is God that justifies (Rom. 8:33), viz.: by these seven means.” He then listed them (though not in this order) as follows: (1) Grace (Rom. 3:24; Tit. 3:7); (2) Christ (Gal. 2:16); (3) The name of the Lord Jesus (and we would add that the passage also says “by the Spirit of our God”) (1 Cor. 6:11); (4) His blood (Rom. 5:9); (5) Knowledge (Isa. 53:11); (6) Faith (Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:24); and (7) Works (Jas. 2:21; Jas. 2:24-25). Romans 8:30 tells us that those whom God calls (invites), He also justifies (declares just or righteous). Such

was/is accomplished by the grace of God, by the Christ, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of our God, by the blood of Christ, by the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, by their faith, and by their works of obedience.

The Purpose Of The Church

Obedience to the Gospel involves faith/belief in God (Heb. 11:6), in God's Son (John 8:24), and in the Gospel of God's Son (Mark 16:15-16), which faith comes by hearing the Gospel (Rom. 10:17). Obedience also involves repentance (Acts 17:30-31; Luke 13:3-5) and confession of faith (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10). And obedience to the Gospel of Christ involves baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), for the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16) by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5).

Those who render obedience to the Gospel are now members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), which is the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) into which they were called (Col. 3:15) and wherein they are reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16). They are now fellow citizens (Eph. 2:19) in the kingdom (Matt. 18:3; John 3:3-5), which is the church (Matt. 16:18-19), into which they were translated (Col. 1:13-14) and wherein they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28). They are now children of God (Gal. 3:26-27) having been born again (John 3:3-5) into the family or house of God, which is the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). They are now sheep in the Lord's one fold (John 10:1-18), which is the church (Acts 20:28), with Christ as their Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

They are now good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3-4), the captain of their salvation (Heb. 2:10), who put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20) and war a good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18), fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12) as they engage in spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3-6)

that they might receive their crown (2 Tim. 4:6-8). They are now laborers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9) in the Lord's vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), knowing that their labor will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). They are now branches in the vine (John 15:1-8) striving to be fruitful unto every good work (Col. 1:10). They are now a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6) in the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17), offering living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5), financial sacrifices (Phil. 4:18), the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), and doing good (Heb. 13:16).

They are now lively or living stones in God's spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), God's building (1 Cor. 3:9). They are now chaste virgins espoused to one husband (2 Cor. 11:2), married to Him Who is raised from the dead (Rom. 7:4), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but striving to be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:22-33) as the bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9). The church is the society of all the saved (Eph. 5:23), and all the saved are added to the church by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47).

The Purpose Of The Creature (Man)

The word for "glorified" (Rom. 8:30) means "to make glorious, adorn with luster, clothe with splendor." Other passages (that use this same word) to read and study include:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph. 3:21).

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,

according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

From these passages we learn that we are to glorify the Father Which is in heaven. We learn that unto God be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. We further learn that this is to be done throughout all ages, world without end. We finally learn that, one day, when the Lord returns, our vile bodies will be changed and fashioned like unto the Savior's glorious body. For these reasons it is often correctly stated that the purpose of the Bible is to declare the glory of God and the salvation of man through Christ.

The Conclusion Of Solomon

The eloquent brother T. B. Larimore once preached a sermon at the South College Street Church in Nashville, Tennessee that was entitled "The Whole Duty of Man." It was based on the writings of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes. He said:

Unquestionably, Solomon, in writing the book called "Ecclesiastes," was in the hand of Providence as a great actor upon a stage, with the universe for an audience, trying to teach all mankind that this world can never give the bliss for which we sigh; that it is not the whole of life to live, nor all of death to die.⁸

He remarked that "Solomon was the man to go on the stage and present this to all of us, and to go on before us across the stage and then tell us the result."⁹ He then divided the book and sermon into four scenes from the life of Solomon. He then said:

And now when I am done presenting this lesson, and you are done with your patient listening, then you can go home and study and study until God shall call you hence, but you will not find anything that mortals depend upon for

happiness that has not been presented in one of these four pictures—in wisdom, in wealth, in pleasure, or in power.¹⁰

He described the fifth and final scene as follows:

The curtain rises and we can see far down the stage. It is a little gloomy, but the mists clear away, and through the rifted clouds the sun shines down, and we can see, far away on the other side of the stage, Solomon again. What is he doing? Weary of these things, he has retired from the busy haunts of men to commune with nature in fair primeval woods, to find the bliss for which the soul sighs. We see that he is looking at a dewdrop that rests on the cheek of a fragrant flower—the tear of night, but now the radiant gem of the morning, in whose bosom the blazing sun is mirrored, a gem equaling in beauty any gem in his diadem. Something attracts his attention—he hears a bird sing, and looks to see it, but the bird is gone. He turns again to the dewdrop, but at the first kiss of morning it has dropped from the cheek of the flower and it is gone. Something attracts his attention—he looks around, and, looking back again, he sees the flower itself is faded; too sensitive and delicate to bear the sunshine upon it, it falls to the earth and the dust has hidden its sweetness and its beauty. He looks again; years have flown by like moments. He sees the tall trees, that stood like bannered hosts in battle array, tottering; the cedars fall—the cedars of Lebanon. The hills are crumbling, the mountains are fallen. The nations of the earth sink down into the bosom of death. He turns to the heavens; he sees the stars falling from the withered vault above, it being night because the sun has been suddenly extinguished. The time for the crash of matter and the wreck of worlds is come. He sees the elements melt like wax before the flame. The right arm of Jehovah is bared; he shakes the earth and folds up the firmament like a scroll. The whole world is ablaze, lighting up with fearful splendor the eternal city of our God. It is all gone, and Solomon turns and writes back over the flame: “Vanity and vexation of spirit.”

He comes to the front and stands before us. He tells us that he appreciates the privilege and opportunity that God has given him to show the value of earthly things, if we look to them for happiness; and then dipping his pen in the living light of God, he brings it down upon the waiting scroll, and as he writes he breathes it out to all the listening earth: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And having thus written the conclusion of the whole matter, the pen drops from his weary fingers, the curtain falls, the picture is complete, the play is ended.¹¹

Brother Larimore then said:

This is Ecclesiastes. Only in the gift of his Son to save a ruined and recreant race has God manifested more clearly his love for the sons and daughters of men than in placing Solomon upon the stage to teach us these wonderful lessons.¹²

The Commandments Of The Savior

Jesus Christ, the gift of God's love (John 3:16), was and is indeed wiser and greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31). When He was once asked the question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matt. 22:36), He answered:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

Since love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and since some are saying that the Word alone in a heart cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit and then claim that the

Holy Spirit must directly affect a saint's heart, I want to close with this short article:

A Special Word on Love
by Thomas B. Warren (deceased)

The apostle Paul made clear the absolute necessity of loving God when he said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22). Thus, Paul teaches that no man who does **not love** the Lord will be saved.

Without love, even great things (that is, things which with love are very great) are actually worthless. Paul made clear that **without love** (1) even great **oratorical** ability in preaching the Word becomes as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1); (2) even if one has spiritual gifts which can result in great deeds, the possessor of those gifts is "**nothing**" (that is, not pleasing to God, 1 Cor. 13:2), if he does not love; and (3) even tremendously sacrificial acts of benevolence (giving goods to the poor, giving one's body to be burned), if done without love, profit the sacrificers nothing (1 Cor. 13:3).

No One Can Become A Christian Without Love

No man can be saved without **knowing** God (John 17:3). And, if a man does not **love** God, he does not know God (because God is love) (1 John 4:8). Thus, if one does not love God, then he is not saved (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22).

One cannot receive the remission of his past (alien) sins—that is, those committed before he became a Christian—unless he loves God. Loving God is essential to (prerequisite to) one's being born again (1 John 4:7).

One can be a believer in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and yet still be lost. This is the case because one can be a **believer** and yet not be obedient to the Lord. Some rulers among the Jews believed in the Lord, but they would not confess that faith because they loved the praise of **men** more than they loved the praise of **God** (John 12:42-43). Yet, no one can be saved who refuses to confess Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; cf. Rom. 10:9-10).

Yet, if one **loves** the Lord, he **will obey** Him insofar as he understands His Will. Jesus Himself said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He made clear that it is the man who **knows and keeps** (obeys) His commandments who truly loves Him (John 14:21).

There is no way to demonstrate either **faith** or **love** other than in obedience to His Word (Heb. 5:8-9; John 14:15; John 14:21; 1 John 4:8; John 17:3; et al.).

So, the man who claims to believe in and love the Lord but who **refuses** (1) to honestly, sincerely, and diligently study His Will and (2) having learned that Will, to obey it, does **not** really love the Lord. And, let it be repeated, no man who does not love the Lord can become a child of God.

No One Can Live A Faithful Christian Life Without Loving Both the Lord And His Own Brethren In Christ

Love is at the very heart of the Christian life. John said, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

John goes on to say, "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Thus, it is clear, in the light of this passage and common human practice, that it is among the worst sort of self-deception for one to give himself credit for loving God while he is jealous of, envious of, and malicious toward his fellowman.

It is clear to me, from observations made during [many] years of preaching the Gospel, that one of the most disgusting scenes to behold is one with the following elements: a man standing for a time in the pulpit preaching (apparently with great love) on the necessity of loving one's fellowman (especially his brother in Christ, Gal. 6:10), only to step down from the pulpit to engage in a veritable campaign of hatred and destruction of the reputation and life of a faithful Gospel preacher, elder, or other brother.

Can one truly be a **lover of God Almighty** (which he **must** be in order to be pleasing to God) while he is a **hater** of his brother? The Bible makes clear that such is impossible (1 John 4:20).

Brother Warren proved from the Bible that non-Christians not only can produce the fruit (of the Spirit) of love, but they must do so in order to become children of God. He proved from the Bible that Christians not only can but must produce the fruit (of the Spirit) of love in order to remain faithful as children of God. May God help all of us to do so.

Conclusion

Why should I believe the Bible? Because it tells me that the purpose of my existence is to glorify God and save

myself and others. It tells me that it is my duty to fear God and keep His commandments. It tells me that I must love God with all my heart, soul and might and love my neighbor as myself.

Endnotes

- 1 Thomas Bass, "Interview with Richard Dawkins," **Omni**, Volume 12, Issue 4 (January 1990), p. 86.
- 2 Ibid, p. 60.
- 3 George Gaylord Simpson, **The Meaning Of Evolution** (New York: Mentor, 1951), p. 180.
- 4 All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.
- 5 All Greek definitions in this chapter are from the **Online Bible Greek Lexicon**, unless otherwise indicated.
- 6 Dub McClish, "The Foreknowledge Of God," **The Godhead: A Study Of The Father, Son, And Holy Spirit**, ed. B. J. Clarke (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1998), p. 161.
- 7 Alexander Campbell, **The Christian System** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1980), p. 216.
- 8 T. B. Larimore, **Letters And Sermons Of T. B. Larimore** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1949), p. 19.
- 9 Ibid, p. 21.
- 10 Ibid, p. 30.
- 11 Ibid, pp. 30-32.
- 12 Ibid, p. 32.

CHAPTER 12

Because It Tells Me Where I Am Going

Kevin Beard

Introduction

HUMAN BEINGS ARE CURIOUS and inquisitive—just take a long car ride with a four-year-old and this fact will become patently clear. We want answers to the questions we have. This desire to discover what we do not know moves us to accomplish many things in life, both trivial and significant. It is the reason we cannot put down a good book, and it is the reason men have explored the world's frontiers. We want to know what happens next, what lies beyond. When we look at life itself, we have the same questions. What happens next? What lies beyond the grave? Where are we going? Unlike the explorers who first crossed uncharted seas, we cannot answer those questions by traveling to the place about which we want to learn. To do that would require traveling to the grave and returning. Consequently, we must rely on information given to us from an authoritative source that is not limited by life on earth. The Bible alone gives us that information, and its testimony about the subject sets it apart from every other source that makes the same kinds of claims.

In examining what the Bible has to say about man's ultimate destination, we will seek to answer three questions. **What are some common ideas about where we are going?** There are many different kinds of claims

about what happens after death. Each one purports to be correct, but it is quite obvious that they cannot all be correct, because they all say different things. **What does the Bible say about it?** God's Word reveals to us all we need to know about where we are going. It is the only reliable source of this information. **Why is it important?** Knowledge of our ultimate destiny will have an impact on how we live this life. It is important to know where we are going so that we can receive the blessings God has promised for the life to come.

What Are Some Common Ideas About Where We Are Going?

Not everyone agrees on the answer to our question. Of course, that is no surprise to anyone. The ideas that men have about it vary as much from one another as apples do from oranges. Some believe we are not going anywhere, while others believe in elaborate, complicated scenarios in which the departed soul can travel any number of paths. We will not examine in great detail any of the different views on this issue, but will mention just a few to illustrate the fact that many different ideas exist.

Atheists, skeptics, humanists, and the like, deny that there is a destination to which we are headed after life is over. Since their worldview revolves around the misguided notion that the sum total of everything that exists is purely material, they have no foundation for the possibility of anything beyond this material world. The idea that we are going somewhere demands that something exist that is not purely material. So the atheist must believe that we are going nowhere. Life runs its course, comes to its end, and there is nothing else. Nothing done in life has any real consequence.

Some who hold this basic view still want to have the comfort of knowing that there is something more to be

said for a person's life than just that it is snuffed out when the body dies. These people like to stress that we do live on after death—not literally, but in the thoughts and memories of those who knew us. This view would make it easier to think that their life meant something, because, if they had some kind of impact for good, they will be remembered. But, if there is really nothing other than the material, why should it matter?

Buddhists, Hindus, and the New Age adherents believe in various forms of reincarnation. Their basic belief is that the spirit is on a perpetual journey, seeking the ultimate level of good, enlightenment, or some other such principle. There are variations in the different beliefs, but they have the basic idea in common that, when one's life ends, the spirit, life force, or whatever they choose to call it moves from that dead body into another one. Whether this next incarnation is an improvement depends on its karma, which is determined by the kind of life lived before. Those who continue on a course of greater good or more enlightenment will eventually find a state of greater blessing in which they can escape the process of being born into new bodies over and over. Of course, the Scriptures deny this whole philosophy. Hebrews 9:27 plainly says, "And as it is appointed unto men **once** to die, but after this the judgment" (emp. mine throughout, KB).¹

The only source of true information about our ultimate destiny is from the God Who made us. Some today are amazed at the stories of those who believe they died on the operating table and came back, or those who had "near death," or "out of body" experiences. But there is no eyewitness evidence of what lies beyond death. It is interesting that the Bible mentions several people who were raised from the dead, but it says nothing of what they had to say about where they went when they died. We have no way of knowing whether these people were

allowed to describe their experience or not, but, judging from Paul's experience, it may be that they were not allowed. He wrote of a man he knew (obviously referring to himself) who was allowed to see Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2-4). However, he said that he heard things that were not lawful to be repeated (2 Cor. 12:4). It may have been the case that those who were raised from the dead were similarly prohibited from describing the details of their experience.

Imagine the kind of publicity someone like Lazarus would receive in today's world. This man died and had been dead four days before Jesus raised him (John 11:17ff). Yet the Bible is silent regarding what, if anything, he had to say about where he went and what he saw. Surely, if the Holy Spirit did not see fit to include in the Scriptures such eyewitness testimony from those who actually died and rose again, we should not be impressed with the claims that some make today of having died and returned. We should, however, pay great attention to what God has to say about it.

What Does the Bible Say About It?

To grasp what the Bible says about where we are going, we have to begin with the concept of eternity. It is a concept that is difficult to comprehend because we are not eternal, and nothing in our physical world is eternal. Since nothing can come from nothing, something must always have existed. The Bible declares that it is God Who has always existed. Isaiah declared that God "inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15). The Psalmist proclaimed, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psm. 90:2). God is eternal, not only in the sense of having always existed in the past, but also in the sense of always existing into the future. Time has no effect on Him:

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end (Psm. 102:25-27).

God is eternal. He had no beginning; He will have no end. Time began when God spoke the universe into existence, and it will end when God declares an end to all material things. But eternity transcends time. It is difficult for finite human beings to grasp infinite concepts. To what do we compare an existence where there is no time?

The eternal God breathed life into the first man's nostrils, and that man "became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). With this act of creation, God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). God is the "father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9), and, thus, when we die, our spirits return unto God Who gave them (Eccl. 12:7). Having been made in the image of an eternal God, man has a spirit that will never die. Jesus refuted the Sadducees' false reasoning about the resurrection by declaring unequivocally about those who pass from this life: "neither can they die anymore" (Luke 20:36).

So, if there is a part of us that never dies, what then, is death? James defined exactly what death is when he used it as an illustration in his discussion of true faith: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:26). There are two parts to the human being: a body and a spirit (or soul). The body is material and is therefore only a temporary home for the spirit. Paul referred to the body as a "mortal body" (Rom. 6:12), which is "corruptible" (1 Cor. 15:53) and decaying (2 Cor. 4:16, ASV), and he compared it to a tabernacle, or tent, as opposed to a permanent structure (2 Cor. 5:1). But the spirit lives on after the death of the body.

The Bible makes many references to the fact that the human spirit lives on after death. It is implied in the fact that Enoch was “translated” (Heb. 11:5), and that Elijah was taken directly from this life without death (2 Kings 2:11). David’s infant son died shortly after birth. After the child died, David’s servants marveled at the fact that David began to return to normal life, since he had agonized over the baby’s condition while he lived. David’s explanation shows the confidence he had in the survival of the spirit after death:

While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me (2 Sam. 12:22-23).

Jesus took Peter, James, and John apart from the rest of the apostles and allowed them to see His transfiguration. As the apostles looked on, not only did they see Jesus’ appearance change, but they also saw Moses and Elijah standing and talking with Him (Matt. 17:1-3). The penitent thief who was crucified alongside Jesus asked to be remembered in Jesus’ kingdom, to which Jesus said, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). The body dies, but the spirit lives on to return to the God Who inhabits eternity.

As we grapple with a concept that is admittedly too vast for our complete understanding, another question arises that is much easier to answer: what will it be like in eternity?

Jesus made it clear that there are only two potential destinations for us after life is over. He said:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in

thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

“Destruction” and “life”—the two concepts are polar opposites.

Eternal destruction takes place in hell. Jesus went to great lengths to warn us about that place, so that we might not have to go there. Hell is described as a place of pain and anguish. Fire may be the first thing that comes into most people’s minds when they hear the word “hell.” Indeed, the Bible describes hell this way. The second death is a “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8). Jesus called it “everlasting fire” (Matt. 25:41) and “the fire that never shall be quenched” (Mark 9:43). Fire is terrifying to most people, and the thought of being trapped in a burning building is horrible, indeed. When we think of fire, different thoughts might come to mind: destruction, pain, uncontrollable, consuming. Maybe this is why God chose to describe hell as a place of fire. Certainly we should not think that the fire is necessarily literal, because fire is a material entity. All material things are going to be destroyed before the Judgment. But do not miss the point here: though we say that the fire of hell is not necessarily literal, the suffering in hell that the fire represents is indescribably worse than any literal fire could be.

The pain and anguish of hell are described not only as physical pain, but also as mental or emotional suffering. Jesus described the Judgment scene to the Jews of His day in a very vivid way. He compared it to the master of a house closing the door and shutting out those who would be lost. Despite their pleading and their claims to be associates of the master, they are barred from entering. Their anguish at this denial is overwhelming: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” (Luke 13:28). For these Jews, nothing could be worse than the idea of exclusion from the kingdom in which would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with all the prophets.

The worst thing about hell is that God will not be there. In this life we can be separated from God by our sin and live far away from Him spiritually. But we have never known an absolute separation from God. Even the wicked enjoy the good things of life that ultimately come from God. But that will not be so in hell.

Some who refuse to accept the truth of who will be lost and who will be saved have said, “If my loved one is not in Heaven, then I don’t want to be there either.” God is love (1 John 4:8), but, if God is not in hell, how could there be love? How can we benefit from the love we have for friends and family in hell if love has been removed?

Some seem to think that they can find a way to enjoy themselves in hell. There is a bumper sticker that expresses this sad attitude in a supposedly humorous way: “Heaven doesn’t want me and hell’s afraid I’ll take over!” It is hard to imagine how anyone could be more deceived than to think like that. There will be nothing good in hell. Jesus said, “there is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). James said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17). There will be nothing good in hell because God, the source of all that is good, will not be there.

God does not desire that anyone be in hell in eternity (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). But God’s holiness prevents the inclusion of any sin in His presence. When we sin we separate ourselves from God—that is, we die spiritually. If we continue in this spiritual death until the time of physical death, we will go into eternity separated from

God by sin. This separation will be permanent; it is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

The Lord has prepared a beautiful home for the righteous. He told the apostles that this home would be in His Father's house (John 14:1-3). John saw a representation of this place and described it in terms of great splendor, majesty, and value. Its gates and walls were made of various gemstones, and its street was made of gold (Rev. 21:9ff). But, we should not expect to see a city with the literal characteristics John described. Rather, we should expect to see a place of beauty and glory that outstrips our imagination.

The glory of that place is not only in the beauty of it, but also in the fact that God is there. Since we will be in the presence of the source of all love and all that is good, it will be impossible for evil to enter. All spiritual defilement will be barred: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). Since all evil will have been abolished, then all of the negative consequences of evil will be removed as well: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). This glorious home awaits all who submit themselves to the will of God and receive the salvation He offers to all.

Why Is It Important?

Philosophers have contemplated basic questions about man's existence for centuries. Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? It seems reasonable that rational, intelligent people would wonder about such concepts, but what are the answers? Are there even answers to be found? People have come to different

conclusions about that, but the Bible reveals the answers. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate those three questions about man's existence because the answer to each is intertwined with the answers to the others. So, when we seek to know why it is important to know where we are going, we will, of necessity, consider matters that involve those other questions, which we are not directly considering here. The importance of knowing where we are going can be summed up in one word: "life." Our understanding of what lies beyond this life shapes the most important decisions we make in this life.

It Gives Direction To Life

A life lived without direction is a life that is wasted. The Lord considered this situation one to be pitied:

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things (Mark 6:34).

Belief in life after death gives us a sense of direction in this life, and a sense of direction in life compels us toward excellence. When we believe that we are headed toward something instead of nothing, we will try to make the journey in the best way possible. What is the motivation for someone who does not believe that life will continue in another place after death? The humanist would say the motivation lies in the betterment of mankind. This altruistic philosophy may be admirable on some level, but, if man really is the highest of all living things (that is, if there is no God, as the humanist believes), what does it really matter? If I did not believe that God existed and would hold me accountable for the way I lived my life, why would it matter to me whether my life contributed anything to the common good of mankind? Even a child

can understand this reasoning. Katharine Tait, the daughter of noted atheist Bertrand Russell, wrote about life with her father and told of the difficulty he had in compelling her as a child to fulfill some moral responsibility. Wayne Jackson quoted from her book:

Tait recalls that as a child she might say, regarding some moral responsibility, "I don't want to! Why should I?" A conventional parent, she notes, might reply: "Because I say so...your father says so... God says so..." Russell, however, would say to his children: "Because more people will be happy if you do than if you don't." "So what?" she would respond, "I don't care about other people." But her father would reply: "You should." In her innocence she would inquire: "But why?" To which the redundant rejoinder would be: "Because more people will be happy if you do than if you don't." Tait observed: "We all felt the heavy pressure of his rectitude and obeyed, but the reason was not convincing—neither to us nor to him."²

This desire to leave a positive impact on humanity must come from a deep-seated desire for something to continue for us after we die. But, since the humanist denies the existence of God and the continuation of life after death, that desire is channeled into areas that are limited to this life.

Finding direction in life directly relates to one of the basic philosophical questions about human existence: what is the purpose of life? Philosophers have written so many books about this one question that they would fill entire libraries. The answer to that question is not nearly as elusive as men have thought: understanding where we are going gives direction for life, and that direction brings life's purpose to light. But why is there such a longing in us for life to have purpose, meaning, and direction? If the atheist is right, then there is no purpose to life; in fact, there can be no purpose to life. A purpose for human life implies that there is one who is greater than we, who gave

purpose to our existence. Since atheism rejects the existence of any kind of superior, intelligent, purposeful being, it must reject the notion that there is a purpose to life. According to this view, we exist as a result of a long series of accidents, in a universe that accidentally came into being from nothing; thus, we came from nothing and we are going to nothing. What a melancholy outlook on life!

The Bible reveals that physical death is not the end of our existence, and that judgment will follow death (Heb. 9:27). Paul said, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). The judgment that follows death will be one in which we answer for our lives; we will give account of ourselves to God. He is aware of how we live, He is concerned with how we live, and He has a standard by which we must live. Knowing these things will move us to follow the direction God gives. It moves us to strive for the best.

The person who knows where he is going will want to live the best life he can live because he knows that he will have to answer for that life. Since the Word of Christ is the standard of judgment we will face (John 12:48), we understand that living the best life we can means conforming to Christ’s standard. That standard teaches us how to be better—better in the home (Eph. 5:22-6:4), better in the workplace (Eph. 6:5-9), and better in the community in general (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 12:18; Rom. 13:1). But, most importantly, it tells us how to be better people. Because of sin, everyone is separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2), unrighteous (Rom. 3:10), and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), but the Bible shows us how to be freed from sin through the blood of Christ (Rom. 8:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). We become better people, not through our own goodness, but through the operation of God, when we are buried with Christ in baptism (Col. 2:12).

It Gives Hope Throughout Life

Try to imagine life without hope. Gone would be all the wonderful stories in literature about heroic men and women who, buoyed by hope, refused to give up when the days were darkest and, worse yet, gone would be the real-life heroes whose lives and character inspired those stories. Without hope, why persevere? Why make sacrifices for the good of others? Why not just give up?

Hope is a very powerful thing, but sometimes people use the word in a way that does not convey that fact. They may say, “I hope such and such happens,” when they really mean, “I wish such and such would happen.” Hope is much more than a wish. Hope is defined as “desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.”³ Thayer defined *elpis*, the Greek word most often translated “hope,” as “expectation of good, . . . joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation.”⁴ Hope is an anchor for the soul (Heb. 6:17-20).

God has revealed what lies beyond this life, and we can trust His promises. This assurance and hope provide the comfort and encouragement we need in the face of life’s difficulties: “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18).

When we face difficult circumstances in life, we might decide to change course, thinking that the current course of life must be wrong, since it led to difficulty. That approach to life would bring doubt, instability, and misery. We would be in a constant state of flux, never really sure whether the course of our lives would lead to a pleasant end. But hope is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19). Regardless of the circumstances of life, we know where we are going and have the confident expectation of reaching that better destination.

Hope is the confidence that things will get better, but, without the knowledge of where we are going, what is the basis of hope? We might be convinced that things in life will surely get better, that things could not get any worse. But what assurance is in that thought? We might like to think that things will surely get better, but observation tells us that such is not always the case. Sometimes people go through hard times that only seem to get worse. Just like we cannot be assured that things will get better, neither can we be assured that life will always be fair.

Someone who was experiencing hardship might reason this way: "I've had my share of difficulty; surely it will soon be time for me to have it easy." But no one really believes that life is truly fair, do they? Bad things happen to good people, and the good die young. There is no basis for hope if we limit our view to this life only. If we believed there were nothing after physical life, it seems that we would very easily despair in difficult times. When faced with situations in which life, health, wealth, or comfort seem ready to be taken away, in what does the person who denies any life after death hope?

True hope can anchor the soul because it is not founded in the uncertainties of physical life. Our hope anchors us in this life because it rests in the promise of God and in His unchanging nature. Our hope is set firmly in heaven, and we know that Jesus has gone there as a forerunner for us (Heb. 6:20), and that He has, therefore, opened the way for us to go there, too (Heb. 10:19-20). No matter what happens in life, we have a better place waiting for us if we are faithful to the Lord.

It Gives Comfort At Death

Of all the things we think are certain in life, nothing is so certain as death. The inspired writer declared, "it is

appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27). Add to that the fact that there is nothing so final as death (that is, from this life’s perspective), and you have the makings of one of the most potentially devastating emotional experiences in human life.

For many people, the thought of their own death is terrifying. They do not know what to expect when death comes, and that uncertainty is frightening. For others, the thought of dying initiates a defiant attitude that motivates them to do whatever they can to hold off the unavoidable as long as possible. Because of these kinds of ideas and attitudes, many people have tried to stay young and healthy, sometimes going to great extremes to do so. In 1513, Juan Ponce de Leon went looking for a fountain of youth in the Bahamas and found Florida instead. Some today pay thousands of dollars to have their dead bodies frozen in hopes of having them thawed and revived at some future time when a cure for their diseases is found. Some have cut themselves off from all outside contact, fearful of being exposed to one deadly microbe or another.

For many, the apprehension of death is not so much for themselves, but for the ones they love. The idea of being separated from now on from a spouse, a parent, a child, or a close friend certainly is not a pleasant thought, but for some it is overwhelming. How sad it is to attend a funeral where the loved ones who are grieving weep uncontrollably, and cannot be comforted! They have nothing in which to hope because the only thing they see is that their loved one is gone and cannot come back again. Sometimes this grief lingers for years, and the one who suffers never really returns to normal functioning in life. In extreme cases, some have been so overcome by their grief that they have taken their own lives.

This is where the knowledge of our ultimate destiny becomes so important. The fear, anxiety, and apprehension of death can be assuaged and even removed by knowing

what comes after death. There is no need to fear death when we live in submission to God's will. Paul welcomed the thought of leaving life on earth:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5:1-4).

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (Phil. 1:21-24).

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Paul did not have a death wish; he just knew that there was something to be gained when death came. His attitude was to live life to the fullest in his service to the Lord, but, when the time for his "departure" came, he would be ready to see it and would welcome the change for the better that it would bring. This knowledge gives tremendous comfort to those who are facing death—either their own or a loved one's. People often say at the funeral of a faithful Christian that there is something different between the way we

mourn when a child of God passes away and when a non-Christian dies. The friends and loved ones still grieve because they have lost someone they dearly love. They will miss the companionship of the one who has died, but their mourning is tempered by their joy of knowing that their loved one has gone home. Knowing where we are going makes a big difference when we face death.

Conclusion

Where are we going? That question has haunted the thoughts of many a philosopher, yet any child in a Bible class could answer it with ease. God wants us to know the answer to that question, and He has answered it for us in His Word. We do not have to rely on speculation or fantastic stories for insight into what lies beyond the grave. Eternity awaits us after we die. But when that question is narrowed to a more personal form—where am I going?—then it becomes a matter of vital importance. Each of us should face that question and realize that we are the ones who will make the determination of whether we are in heaven or hell in eternity. The choice is ours.

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

2 Katharine Tait, **My Father Bertrand Russell** (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), quoted by Wayne Jackson, "An Atheist's Daughter," **Gospel Advocate**, Vol. 121, No. 36 (Nov. 15, 1979), p. 722.

3 "Hope," **Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary**.

4 Joseph Henry Thayer, **Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament**, 16th printing (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), p. 205.

CHAPTER 13

Because It Tells Me How To Have A Happy Home

Wayne Jones

Introduction

WITH A MINDSET MUCH like that of a child, some view any set of rules or restrictions as invasive and unnecessary. Either verbally or mentally they log complaints against the originator and/or enforcer of such ordinances. Some would even go so far as to rebel against authority in order to express their displeasure with being told what they must do (even if they do not disagree with the particular rule against which they are rebelling). Along with complaining and rebelling, false accusations are often included. What teenager has never claimed imposed parental guidelines are intended to ruin their fun or to keep them from being happy? Sadly, some view religious limitations and the Originator of them in a similar light.

Preying on the spiritually immature, Satan presents our Creator as a God who does not want us to have any fun. Satan will insist that we are missing out on something by being a Christian and strictly adhering to God's commands. In fact, this has been the approach of Satan from the very beginning. As you will recall, Satan convinced Adam and Eve that God's tree restriction was keeping them from unknown and possibly unlimited knowledge. It was under this deceptive ploy that Adam and Eve willingly rebelled against God.

It is possible to see God for Who He really is and what He really wants for us. Moses was able to reject the temptations of Pharaoh's palace because he realized that its pleasures would last but for a season (Heb. 11:14-26). Paul reasoned that if God "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).¹ Truly it is childish and immature to view the instruction of God as intrusive and invasive. But rather we should view God's regulations as beneficial as did the Psalmist: "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure" (Psm. 119:162).

One of the underlying reasons that God communicates with man through His written Word is so that man's life on earth will be easier to live and so that we will be happier while here. The word "happy" is used some 24 times in 21 different verses in our English Bibles. Likewise, forms of the words "joy" and "blessed" (which literally means happy) are found over 480 times combined in Holy Writ. It should be quite obvious that God has revealed in precise detail what it takes to make men happy. Sadly, some have wasted their earthly existence in pursuit of happiness without ever turning to the true source of happiness. True happiness which includes inner peace, personal contentment, and spiritual confidence can only be found in a continual study and application of God's Word.

If there is one place wherein we need a restoration of happiness, it is in the home. On May 29, 2005 the town of Bellefontaine, OH awoke to the news that one of their 13,000 citizens, Scott Moody, had killed five others before taking his own life. Scott was just days away from his high school graduation. His victims included his grandparents, mother and two friends whose ages were 19 and 14, respectively.² Just a few weeks prior, a sickening report came out of Waukegan, IL on the weekend of Mother's Day. Two girls (ages eight and nine), who were best friends, were found dead having been stabbed a

combined 31 times. Horrifically, the investigation revealed that the 8-year-old's father was their killer. He even stabbed out the eyes of his own daughter during the attack.³ Who can forget the tragic cases in the not-so-distant past of Susan Smith rolling her car into a secluded lake while leaving her children strapped in their car seats, and Andrea Yates drowning her five children in the bath tub (the youngest of which was 7 years old)? It is a gross understatement to say that we need more teaching and a greater understanding of the home as God desires for it to be. If we engage in that teaching and reach that understanding, perhaps happiness would be restored to the average American home.

For the purpose of this lesson, we want to consider five components of a happy home as they are revealed through command and/or example in the precious Word of God. In a truly happy home...

Wedlock Is Weighty

The moral and spiritual decline of our nation can be directly connected to the demise of the home: "The breakdown of the home is merely a reflection of the dissolution of the marriage relationship."⁴ Thus, Satan's latest and greatest assault leveled against the American home has been a "no holds barred" assault against the Divine institution of marriage. It would seem that the majority has forgotten that "marriage is honorable among all" (Heb. 13:4). Divorce is seen as the solution to a plethora of marital problems. With divorce being accepted without question, the sanctity of the marriage bond has gone the way of the typewriter in a computer driven society. "Till death do us part" should rather be stated, "until the spark is gone." "In sickness and in health" would be better stated, "unless it becomes inconvenient."

Marriage is a serious institution for those who are serious about it. If one were to doubt the seriousness of

marriage, all he would have to do is read the injunctions placed upon the shoulders of the first married couple. Those same injunctions are mandatory for each couple that follows Adam and Eve into the bonds of holy matrimony. A husband and wife should be ready to leave “father and mother...and...become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). The “leaving” part of this command requires physical, emotional, and financial maturity on the part of those who would be married. In short, children (or those who still act and think like children) are not ready for the responsibilities of marriage. Yet, on a daily basis immature people enter into marriage with a less than weighty attitude toward its responsibilities and requirements. The product of such unions are homes “in which none of the children have the same last name and where none of them give honor to Jehovah who instituted marriage in the first place.”⁵

Any time there is a divorce, hurting and pain are involved. That is why Malachi wrote, “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce” (Mal. 2:16). Divorce is often accompanied by loss of love, hurt feelings, broken promises, betrayed trust and/or unforgiving attitudes. Even when divorce occurs because of fornication (Matt. 19:9) there is tremendous pain and anguish in the heart of the one who is betrayed by the physical treason of his or her spouse. Divorce (either Divinely approved of or not) is most often the result of the immature and uninformed decisions of those who are not mentally ready for marriage. Consequently the true, Biblically based happiness that should be found within the parameters of marriage is missing from homes that do not view wedlock as a weighty matter.

Roles Are Remembered

God ordained certain roles to be fulfilled by certain members of the family. When these are fulfilled and each carries his own proverbial weight, true happiness can be

achieved. When one or more family members neglect their God-given role in the home, distrust and disfavor will set in which will ultimately lead to unhappiness. Just as the role of each spiritual family member is vital to the function of the church (1 Cor. 12:20-26), so is the role of each physical family member vital to the function of the home.

The Role Of The Husband/Father

The role of each family member results from the initial responsibility given to the man. If he fails in his role, he should not expect any more from those under his authority. So many men view their God-ordained position as head of the house as a source of prideful arrogance rather than a source of sobering humility. All husbands would do well to consider that being the head of the house has far more to do with responsibility than it does with power. To know that his decisions and instructions will directly affect the eternal destiny of his wife's and children's souls ought to be one of the most sobering thoughts to enter the mind of a man.

As husbands, men have the simplistic, yet complex obligation to love their wives as much as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). In the opinion of this writer, selfless love is the greatest commandment in relationship to the home, just as selfless love was the greatest commandment in relationship to the entirety of the Old Law (Matt. 22:37-38). We are not suggesting that other duties are less important than that of love. But rather, the Bible teaches that a man who loves fully and completely will readily fulfill any other obligation demanded of him. Thus, a man who loves his wife enough to die for her will gladly and efficiently complete his other duties as husband. Those duties include being her provider, her spiritual leader, her physical and spiritual protector, and her companion in life.

As fathers, men have charge to be the leaders when it comes to the rearing of their children. Paul openly charges fathers with these words: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). The two areas in which this type of training will take place are (1) instruction and (2) discipline. Both of these areas will be addressed in greater detail later in this lesson. However, let it suffice at the moment to know that, as the head of the house, the father will be judged partially by how his children were reared. That is his obligation as the father. Yet so many fathers, either out of ignorance or laziness (or even a combination of the two), try to pass this responsibility on to the mother. Such was not the design of God. In many cases, the sad status of the American family can be blamed upon the failure of fathers to be just that—fathers!

The Role Of The Wife/Mother

While this role might not come with a seat in the spotlight, this writer contends that the role of a wife/mother can serve as the spiritual backbone of the home. Her roles are often described by noting her limitations. The most notable limitation placed on her is that she is to submit to her husband and allow him to be the head of the house (Eph. 5:22). No matter what century we are in when we read those words, their meaning is clear. No amount of legislative power or push of the Women’s Liberation Movement can change the role that God has given to the wife. In this role she must faithfully support and obey her husband as the local church would her eldership (Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17). Submissiveness is not a sign of weakness or unimportance, but rather it is a monument to humility and obedience. Only those adversely affected by pride would openly criticize and reject the God-given

role of women to submit to their husbands. Men have tried for centuries to improve upon the plans of God by offering more modern solutions to issues such as the woman's role in the home. Sadly, many have been steered away from the truth of the wife's primary role in the home and led down an unauthorized path in the name of "enlightenment" and "progress." The contentment and happiness of a home is jeopardized when such amendments are made to the wife's God-given role.

While most focus solely on the submissive nature of the woman's role, they often overlook the many other functions of a godly wife and mother. The positive and eternal effects of a godly mother are clearly seen in Paul's revelation about Timothy's faith: "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Tim. 1:5). It would be safe to assume that Lois fit the profile of the New Testament mother as described in Titus 2:4-5. In this passage Paul, by inspiration, requires that the younger women be instructed to be good, chaste, discreet, and homemakers. It is the latter of these requirements that is often the source of great discussion and controversy. While it would not be plausible to claim that women who work outside of the home are sinning before God, it would be worth noting that they are responsible for being "busy at home" (NIV) or "workers at home" (NASB) first and foremost. The Greek word translated "homemaker" literally means "a guard."⁶ Her need to work outside the home for legitimate, financial reasons:

does not relieve her of any of the responsibility placed upon her by Holy Scripture to be a proper wife to her husband and a proper mother to her children. Her first and foremost responsibility in life is to be the kind of wife and mother as directed by inspiration of Scripture!⁷

There is no doubting that when women overstep their boundaries or fail to live up to that which God has required of them, the home and its happiness suffers.

The Role Of The Children

Although they do not like to hear it, the primary role of the children in the home is to learn. When the Spirit was directing the pen of Paul to list the roles of each family member, the very first words directed at the children were: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1). The home should be the training ground for future husbands and wives. Yet, some children ceased to be trained once they reached their teenage years. Most of us have heard the classic line, “As long as you live in my house, you will follow my rules.” The spirit of such a statement is quickly losing its usefulness in our country. In many homes the children are ruling over those who are supposed to be in charge.

Obedience is a direct outgrowth of maturity. That is why you can get on to a three year old for the same thing several times in one day. That toddler cannot fully appreciate verbal restrictions like an older child would. Children who are beginning to mature in their mental approach to life should easily see the purpose in listening to and heeding the advice of their parents. What we are saying, in essence, is that those who refuse the instruction of their fathers or forsake the law of their mothers (Prov. 1:8) lack the maturity needed to heed the call of obedience. In doing so they fail to fulfill their Divinely appointed role in the home.

Selfishness Is Suppressed

Without question, we can say that selfishness has invaded homes both past and present. One example of this is recorded in Joshua 7. The setting of this chapter involves

Israel's determination to conquer the Promised Land. They began that quest in Joshua 6 by following God's instructions and defeating the city of Jericho. Following the defeat of Jericho, they moved on to the city of Ai which was fewer in number than Jericho (Josh. 7:3). Despite what appeared to be an easy victory, the children of Israel were soundly defeated (Josh. 7:5). The reason for their defeat was directly linked to one man's (Achan) disobedience to a command of God in taking for himself spoils from the city of Jericho (Josh. 7:1). What would have caused Achan to disregard the command of God and take silver and gold from Jericho? It was no doubt greed, covetousness, and selfishness that attributed to this sin. Consider further that the effect of this man's selfishness was felt by his family. According to Joshua 7:24-25, Achan and his family were taken, stoned, and burned. Furthermore, the effects of this selfish act were also felt by the nation of Israel. Consider what God told Joshua after the defeat at Ai and before Achan's sin was discovered:

Get up, sanctify the people, and say, "Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow," because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:13).

Truly, Achan's account is proof that once selfishness has invaded the home it will also have a negative and deadly effect on the rest of a nation.

Selfishness in the home will affect every relationship in the home. For example, the way that children treat their parents is often dictated by either a selfish or selfless attitude. Children and teenagers who are selfish often do not appreciate the many sacrifices that most parents make for their children. Self-centered young people simply expect and take for granted the necessities and luxuries of life.

We have all probably seen a young child in a local department store “throwing a fit” so that his or her parent will buy him or her something. Still others of us have been a witness to a 16 or 17-year-old young adult doing the same thing. What is the problem? Plain and simple, the answer is selfishness. Selfishness is also the reason that many teenagers blatantly defy the instructions of their parents (if those instructions are not what the teenagers want to do). Truly the child-parent relationship has been adversely effected by the sin of selfishness.

On the other hand, we have all read the stories in the newspaper or watched them on the evening news about children who were found abandoned on the street or found left alone at home without the proper clothing and food. Many times the parents of the abandoned children have enough money and resources to feed and clothe their children, but they do not do so because of selfishness. The selfish habits of drugs, alcohol and gambling have caused many Moms and Dads to neglect the needs of their children in pursuit of their own self-centered desires. Remember the words of Paul: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). These words ring just as true in our society as they did in the days of Paul. Why would a so-called father spend money on beer and drugs rather than buying food and clothes for his children? Why would a so-called mother spend rent money on her gambling addiction and risk her children having a roof over their heads? Plain and simple, that answer is found in the sin of selfishness.

Selfishness can also have a direct impact upon marriages that, once again, are the foundations of our homes. When God first introduced the marriage relationship in Scripture, He said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and

they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). The unity of marriage should be spiritual, physical and mental. That means that what I like and what I do not like are not the most important things anymore. The most important things are what my spouse likes or does not like. For many people this concept is very hard to grasp. Consequently, their marriages suffer because of it. It has been said that marriage is when you agree to spend the rest of your life sleeping in a room that is too warm, beside someone who is sleeping in a room that is too cold. Sadly, many husbands and wives are so concerned with self that even something as minute as room temperature can cause marital troubles. When we pledge our love to another for life, we are pledging and promising that their interests, ideas, opinions, and desires (provided that they are righteous) will take center stage in our lives.

Yet there are men who want the benefits of marriage, but do not accept the responsibility of putting their wives first. Some men, even after getting married, assume that they can continue to live the life of a single person (i.e., going where they want, when they want, and spending as much money as they want). The truth of the matter is that, when we get married and establish a home, we must act accordingly. As a result, many women seek attention and consideration elsewhere. Likewise, many women can be guilty of the same things.

Eliminating selfishness from a marriage may be very difficult. However, if our marriages are going to all they can be, we must try our hardest. When a couple is finally able to rid their relationship of selfishness, happiness will surely follow. For you see, without the barrier of selfishness in our path, we can be free to meet each need and comfort every hurt of our spouse. Husbands will be more inclined to love their wives in the same way that Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:23). Wives will be more inclined to submit

themselves unto a husband who has shown his determination to meet her every need (Eph. 5:22).

If happiness is what we are seeking in our homes, selfishness cannot be found even in the picture!

Protection Is Provided

This world can be a cold, dark place where mistreatment abounds. Many people turn to alcohol, drugs or even suicide because they cannot handle the pressures and problems of this life. Some individuals have resorted to taking their own lives, and their friends and family members were unaware of their frazzled condition. When you pile the constant, aggressive attacks of Satan upon the pressures of daily life, it is understandable that some would lose heart and become discouraged. Worse than this is the fact some have no place where they can go to find refuge from the daily problems that life so often presents. Our home ought to be that place of protection. A husband who is passed over for the latest promotion ought to be consoled at home rather than having to go to the local bar for someone to talk to. A wife who feels less attractive than she did 15 years ago ought to be reminded of her beauty on a regular basis by her husband. The child who is not Mister Or Miss Popularity at school (and might even be made fun of for one reason or another) ought to come home to a place where he or she is regarded as special and important.

Do you recall where the thoughts of the wayward son turned when a life of sin became more than he could bear? He thought of home. He longed to be nothing more than a hired servant. Why? Perhaps because, even as a hired servant, he would be back inside the walls of that house and in the company of those who made him feel special and accepted. If our homes are going to provide happiness, they must, without question, provide protection.

Instruction Is Important

It is a parent's personal responsibility to teach their children. Yet some turn the instruction of their children over to the church. They assume that sending them to Bible class twice a week will provide their souls with spiritual nutrition they need. Parents, the Bible classes of the local churches should be merely a supplement to what our children are learning at home. Some proudly send their children to "Christian" schools to ensure that their children will receive a fundamental basis of Bible knowledge, but there are two major flaws here. First, our children need a fundamental basis of Bible knowledge long before they get to be 18 years old. It must start at a very young age. Second, there may not be a "Christian" school left that will give our children what they need apart from what they have learned at home!

Parents, we are to instruct our children with diligence and creativity: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). Diligent parenting is accomplished through teaching four times a day, yet it includes every part of every day. This will require parents to be creative in their parenting, much like God was creative. Jonah's lesson was learned in the belly of the fish. Balaam's lesson was learned while conversing with a donkey. Nebuchadnezzar's was learned while eating the grass of the field like a beast! This type of instruction will not be accomplished by lazy parents.

We can also instruct our children with limitations. Again, this is one of the ways that God taught His people. There are some places that our children will not go; things they will not wear; music they will not own; movies they will not view; words they will not use! Parents must establish and enforce these limitations when their

children are young, so that they will be self-limiting when they are older.

We can also instruct our children through discipline. The psalmist reveals that “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15). While some function under the assumption that their children will simply outgrow the foolishness, and others will claim their children never do anything worthy of being punished, Solomon makes it clear that all children will, at one time or another, act foolishly. Furthermore, it takes discipline to train a child so that he might not do these things again. Various books have been authored by knowledgeable men and women to help us accomplish what God reveals in one simple verse.

We can also instruct our children with demonstration. Have you ever sat to think about what some parents have taught their children through their own actions and words? If some parents translated their actions into words, notice what they would say: “Bible study is unimportant, that is why we do not always attend.” “Worship is needed, but it is not any more important than a Little League game, band competition or family get-together.” “Lying is wrong, unless I am tired and do not want to talk on the telephone.” “Stealing is wrong except when I am doing my taxes.” Whether we realize it, as parents we teach our children with every decision we make!

The instruction of our children in the ways of righteousness will directly affect their happiness and the happiness of our homes. Jesus plainly noted, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them” (John 13:17, KJV).

Goals Are Godly

The true character of a person can be seen by looking at his goals. The things for which he will sacrifice and

suffer loss will say a lot about a man. The same can be said for a family. Those things which are important in the list of family priorities are most often a mirror image of that family's true desires. It is God's expectation that, as families, we "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" and that we set our minds "on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:1-2). It is not possible for a family to "serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

The Bible warns vigorously against the pursuit of material possessions, earthly fame, and personal exaltation. In their place, the Bible encourages us to lay up "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20). Sadly, many families have been choked out by the quest for fame and the love of money despite God's clear warnings against such. Fathers will choose to spend more time at work and less time at home so that the family might live in a better neighborhood, in a bigger house, or drive a better car. All the while, his children are suffering without the presence of a father in the home. Mothers, likewise, will relinquish the obligation of rearing their children and pass them on to a baby-sitter or a grandparent in the interest of money and things. Such goals are not at all godly; in fact, they are the root of all forms of evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

This distortion of priorities can be seen in those things which are emphasized in the home. Even in a home made up of church members, spiritual education often takes a back seat to secular education. While a child would never be allowed to go to school without his books and/or homework, that same child will regularly show up at Bible class without a Bible or without having studied his lesson. Likewise, most parents would make sure that their

children are not late for school, but will, without thought, consistently show up late for Bible class. This writer has even known of parents to make their children stay home from Wednesday night Bible class that they might finish their homework. What kind of message are we sending to our children? With priorities like these, what do we expect the goal of our family to be? Should it surprise us that many of our young people leave the church? In many cases they are never taught to put the kingdom first, as Christ declares in Matthew 6:33. So it should not be surprising that they forsake the Lord later in life. Their decisions are nothing more than a reflection of the goals of the homes in which they were reared.

Parents, husbands, wives, and children are to make a special effort to put God and His church first in all things. No family reunion, Little League game, out-of-town trip or school function should cause us to miss the services of the church—not even a Sunday or Wednesday evening service. Special emphasis should be given to the entire family's spiritual development. Daily devotionals and prayer times will be established in a home wherein the goals are godly. Whether our children are Christians should take precedent over whether they get A's and B's in school. We are not suggesting that grades are not important, but we should not sacrifice our children's souls in the name of the honor roll. The goals of our home should be godly. If they are, spiritual happiness and contentment will be ours.

God Is Glorified

Man was created that he might glorify his Creator:

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created (Rev. 4:11).

Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him (Isa. 43:7).

When we live for Him and do His will, we bring glory and honor to His name, thus fulfilling our very purpose here on earth.

If God created man, individually, for His glory, then we can assume that He also formed families which are made up of individuals for His glory. Many families in the Bible failed time and again to bring glory to God's name. Consider the false worship and jealous attitudes that brought shame (rather than glory to God) into the home of Adam and Eve. Remember the despicable acts of immorality that the daughters of Lot performed with their father. Abraham's family, Isaac's family, and Jacob's family all faced times in which they failed to glorify God because of various sinful attitudes and actions. In each instance, sorrow and pain accompanied the sin. Dear friends, that is not merely a coincidence. Happiness in the home is directly tied to a lack of sin and an intended purpose to exalt, praise, and glorify the name of the Almighty.

There are many books which have been written to solve the problems in our homes. Almost on a daily basis, millionaires such as Oprah and Dr. Phil offer "professional" help to restore happiness to the family unit. While some of their advice might be useful, we seem to have forgotten that the Bible is man's supreme guide in all things—even in how to have a happy home. We can rest assured that, if our homes are homes wherein wedlock is weighty, roles are remembered, selfishness is suppressed, instruction is important, protection is provided, goals are godly, and God is glorified, then we will have happiness and contentment that the world will never know! Truly, we believe the Bible because it provides the blueprint for building a happy home.

Endnotes

1 All quotations are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Information taken from "Ohio Murder-Suicide Leaves Town Stunned," www.news.yahoo.com (May 30, 2005).

3 Information taken from “Father Allegedly Confessed To Stabbing Both Girls, Denied Bond,” <http://www.foxnews.com> (May 11, 2005).

4 Dave Miller, “Key Ingredients For Marriage As God Desires,” **The Christian Home**, ed. Paul Sain (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1998), p. 41.

5 Carl Garner, “A Marriage Built Upon God’s Word,” **As For Me And My House**, ed. Joseph D. Meador (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications, 1999), pp. 137-38.

6 **Strong’s Greek And Hebrew Dictionaries**, electronic version.

7 Roger Banks, “Older Women (And Men) Teach The Younger,” **The Christian Home**, ed. Paul Sain (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1998), pp. 162-63.

CHAPTER 14

Because It Tells Me That Jesus Loves Me

Barry Grider

Introduction

Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak but He is strong.

Jesus, take this heart of mine,
Make it pure and wholly Thine;
Thou hast bled and died for me;
I will henceforth live for Thee.

[Chorus]
Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes, Jesus loves me;
The Bible tells me so.

Anne B. Warner

THIS *LITTLE SONG* HAS been cherished by untold thousands since the time of their youth. No faithful child of God ever grows too old to moisten his lips with its sweet lyrics. In fact, rarely does the day go by that this song is not sung in our family's household. I want each of my children to understand the most basic, marvelous lesson of life—Jesus loves them. Even though it is important that children know the love of Jesus, it is, likewise,

essential that children know why they believe this. The last line of the refrain answers—“The Bible tells me so.”

A faithful lectureship is always determined by its respect for the Bible as the all-sufficient, all-authoritative Word of the living God. There has never been any question as to the faithfulness and soundness of the Southaven congregation, which conducts a spiritual feast each year called the **POWER** Lectures. Every sermon is always preached with a “Thus saith the Lord.” This year, the entire program is dedicated to the Bible and why one should believe it. Since others have taken upon themselves the tremendous responsibility of proving the inspiration of the Bible and the inerrancy of the Scriptures, consider in this study the marvelous message revealed in the precious book Divine.

What Does The Bible Tell Us About The Love Of Jesus?

Some have suggested that the Bible is the unfolding of a beautiful love story. No doubt, the Holy Scriptures reveal the world’s greatest lover—God:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

Jesus Christ was the demonstration of the Father’s love for lost humanity. Keep in mind that Jesus Christ was not forced by the Father to love man. He did not go to the cross against His will:

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have

power to take it again. This commandment have
I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man
lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

Hymn writer James G. Dailey captured the mission
of Jesus as well as any human author, I suppose, when he
penned the following:

Why did my Savior come to earth,
And to the humble go?
Why did he choose a lowly birth?
Because He loved me so!

Why did he drink the bitter cup
Of sorrow, pain and woe?
Why on the cross be lifted up?
Because He loved me so!

[Chorus]
He loved me so,
He loved me so,
He gave His precious life for me,
Because He loved me so.

Saul of Tarsus came face to face with the loving
Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3ff). Once he
became a Christian by following the instructions of
Ananias (Acts 22:16), Saul, later Paul, proclaimed the
message of Christ to the Gentiles, compelled to do so
by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). What motivates a
preacher today? If it is anything other than the love
of Christ, he is misguided, misinformed, and mistaken.
Notice the apostle's prayer for the Ephesians in the
following passage:

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;
that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may
be able to comprehend with all saints what is
the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
and to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).

This writer never thinks of the love of Christ without thinking of the cross. Consider that the cross points heavenward, toward the beating heart of God, reminding us of the height of the love of Christ:

Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:6-7).

Consider that the cross was driven deep into the ground, reminding us of the depth of Christ's love, Who "brought [us] out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Psm. 40:2). No man is so wicked that the grace of God cannot reach him. Consider that the cross stretches outward on both sides, reminding us of the length of Christ's love. Concerning His disciples, "He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He loved them unto the "nth degree." He could not have loved them anymore than He did. Consider that the cross opens its arms to the world, reminding us of the breadth of the love of Christ: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). As Robert Harkness wrote:

Love sent my Savior to die in my stead—
Why should He love me so?
Meekly to Calvary's cross He was led—
Why should He love me so?

Jesus Loves Even Me

Another sweet song our family loves to sing contains the following lyrics:

I am so glad that our Father in heav'n
Tells of His love in the Book He has given,
Wonderful things in the Bible I see
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

O if there's only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the Great King,
This shall my song in eternity be:
"O, what a wonder that Jesus loves me."

[Chorus]
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.

P. P. Bliss

Though I cannot fully comprehend or appreciate His love, and though I do not deserve it, Jesus loves even me!

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Created One!

When God completed His creation, He looked upon the work of His hand and "behold it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). This statement includes the creation of man. In fact, every thing else created was intended for man's enjoyment. He was given dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:28). Man was not made just a little above the beasts, but a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7). Who spoke the universe into existence? The second person of the Godhead, Jesus the Christ, did so:

For by [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him (Col. 1:16).

Certain blessings come to man as a result of being part of His creation: "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). His creation testifies to His goodness

and ought to impress all of humanity: “For the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psm. 19:1). Yet, if all of mankind raise their fists in rebellion to God and snub the cross of His Son (and most have done so), heaven still responds with a resounding “I love you.”

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Innocent One!

Children are gifts from God (Psm. 127:3). The spirit of man comes from God (Zech. 12:1), and, therefore, children are born pure and innocent. Down through the centuries, tyrants such as Pharaoh and Herod have committed atrocities against little children. Even in America, the most innocent among us are often abandoned, abused, or aborted. Yet little children have a true friend in Jesus:

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. And whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:1-6).

Yes, children would find comfort and care when sitting on the knee of Jesus with His arms wrapped around them. Parents ought always to be aware of their actions or reactions toward their children and consider the watchful eye of Jesus. Preacher, do not dismiss that little one tugging on your pants’ leg for your attention! Red, yellow, black, or white—children are precious in Jesus’ sight.

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Sinner!

Those who have little understanding of Jesus' mission perhaps have come to the erroneous conclusion that Jesus came to condemn the sinner instead of seeking the sinner. Of course, it is not Jesus who condemns, but, rather, sin is what condemns:

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:17).

On one occasion, Jesus' enemies brought a woman to him who was taken in the very act of adultery. Jesus knew their evil hearts and why they had brought the woman to Him. Remember His response? "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). It was not that Jesus excused her sin, but, rather, He showed abounding mercy toward the woman because He loved her. He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Paul, the apostle, who formerly was Saul the persecutor, stated, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). Jesus died that we might be saved. When the murderous throng cried out to release Barabbas and to crucify Jesus, Barabbas was not the only one who walked away free. Every one of us was allowed to walk away free as the innocent One willingly laid down His life for us, paying our penalty for sin. Paul records, "For [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Remember Isaiah's words about the suffering servant of God in Isaiah 53:

“**He** hath borne **our** griefs” (Isa. 53:4).

He “carried **our** sorrows” (Isa. 53:4).

He was “stricken,” “smitten,” and “afflicted” (Isa. 53:4).

“**He** was wounded for **our** transgressions” (Isa. 53:5).

“**He** was bruised for **our** iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).

“The chastisement or **our** peace was upon **him**” (Isa. 53:5).

“With **his** stripes **we** are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

“The Lord hath laid on **him** the iniquity of us **all**” (Isa. 53:6).

“**He** was oppressed” for **us** (Isa. 53:7).

“**He** was afflicted” for **us** (Isa. 53:7).

“**He** is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” for **us** (Isa. 53:7).

“Jesus loves me when I’m good, when I do the things I should. Jesus loves me when I’m bad, though it makes him very sad.” Parents and friends should never say to a child, “If you do what is wrong, Jesus will not love you anymore.” Jesus loves us despite what we do!

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Self-Righteous!

How sad for one to be filled with self and not with Christ! Those who are self-righteous, like the Pharisee who prayed in the temple (cf. Luke 18:10-12), glorify themselves and are so satisfied with themselves that they do not see the need for a Savior. Yet, Jesus loves the self-righteous. He demonstrated this love when He went into the home of Simon the Pharisee. Remember the following account:

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the

ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said unto him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." And he saith, "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most." And he said unto him, "Thou hast rightly judged." And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:36-47).

Despite Jesus' disappointment in Simon, His willingness to enter his home, to dine with him, and to teach him, proves His love.

On another occasion, a rich, young ruler came to Jesus seeking eternal life. When Jesus told him to keep the commandments, the young man boasted he had done so from his youth. Knowing he still lacked something, the text declares, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him" (Mark 10:21).

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Jew!

Under the old economy, God worked through a fleshly nation, Israel. Jews were descendants of Judah,

the great-grandson of Abraham. Jesus Christ “sprang out of Judah” (Heb. 7:14). Remember, God made a promise to Abraham: “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). This was a seed promise. Paul stated, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

Jesus was born into a Jewish family. He began His ministry preaching and teaching to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). This was only right since unto them had been “committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Yet, despite His love, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

Furthermore, Jesus’ love was so intense that on one occasion He wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Jews crucified Jesus, yet they were the first recipients of the Gospel message (cf. Acts 2). If Jesus did not desire the salvation of the Jews, why would Paul write, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile]” (Rom. 1:16)?

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Gentile!

Notice in the previous passage that the Gospel is for the Jew and Gentile. Paul asked, “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also” (Rom. 3:29). Jesus did not die for a few. He did not die just for the Jew. He died for the world. He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Jesus demonstrated His love for the Gentile when a centurion requested that his servant be healed. Concerning the soldier’s faith, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matt. 8:10). The scope of the Gospel is clearly seen in the great commission. Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19).

Though it was difficult for Peter to be convinced, he finally preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:34-48). Upon their receipt of the message, they became the first Gentile converts. Hence, no one is excluded from the Lord’s loving invitation.

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Friendless One!

Have you ever in pity asked, “Does anyone care for me?” David cried, “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psm. 142:4). Most all of us have shared the pathos expressed by the Psalmist. One does care, even when it appears all others have forsaken us. Jesus is the friend to the friendless. He cares for the one who is hurting.

When Jairus’ daughter died, and when Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, died, Jesus came to the respective families to comfort and heal. When a lone woman in the crowd touched His garment that she might be healed, He knew about it and reached out to her (Matt. 9:22). Lepers were truly the outcasts of society, but Jesus did not cast them out (Matt. 8:3). He reached out in compassion to heal those deranged because of possession by devils. So often, we try to avoid problem people, but not Jesus. He gave us the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-36. Whose character represents the Good Samaritan? None other than Jesus.

He loves the lonely. He understands what it means to be alone. While in the garden of Gethsemane, He experienced exceeding sorrow, while the dearest on earth to Him slept nearby. He went to the cross alone, forsaken by all. Therefore, even when we feel that no other human cares about us, we can turn to Him:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16).

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Penitent!

It was Jesus Who declared, “I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). While the words of the Savior are strong, man is fortunate that our Lord has allowed us the opportunity to correct our ways. Peter wrote, “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The fact that He is longsuffering is an indication that He deeply loves us and desires our salvation.

Peter understood this. After promising his Lord that he would never deny Him, he turned around and denied Him three times. He repented with tears. Did Jesus give him another opportunity? After Jesus arose from the dead, the angel said to the women, “But go your way, tell his disciples **and Peter** that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you” (Mark 16:7, emp. mine, BG). Yes, Jesus gave Peter another chance. Are we not thankful? Can we imagine New Testament Christianity without Peter? Jesus loved him so much that He forgave him.

Because of His love, Jesus has provided a second law of pardon. John wrote:

But it we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-9).

Simon the sorcerer was converted and then sinned by trying to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter, who likewise had traveled the path of repentance, said:

Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee (Acts 8:20-22).

Simon did repent and, hence, received forgiveness. How thankful each of us should be that our Lord Jesus does not easily give up on any one of us! While we have breath, we have hope.

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Lost One!

When a person loses his soul in hell, he goes to that horrible place having rejected what Christ did to rescue his soul. While salvation is conditional, the love of Christ is unconditional. When the rich young ruler rejected the Lord's invitation, Jesus still loved him. Because of His love, He will not force Himself on any of us. Hear the lament in Jesus' voice as He cries:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate (Matt. 23:37-38).

When the lost stand before Christ in judgment, not one can look at Him and say, "You did not love me." The lost one goes to hell loved by the Lord Jesus.

Jesus Loves Even Me—The Saved One!

How sweet to know that Jesus desires our association and wants us to be with Him throughout all eternity! Those on His right hand will hear the glorious words, “come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). Since He loves us, He longs for us to share in His glory and reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). Even now He is preparing a place for us:

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

What will heaven be like? We know:

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

Christ is the light of that city (Rev. 21:23), and we shall bask in the glow of His love forever.

Conclusion

What do we conclude about the love of Jesus? (1) His love is unconditional. He loves us regardless of our attitude toward Him. (2) His love is eternal. There will never be a time when He does not love us. (3) His love is for all humanity. No one is beyond the reach of His love.

Yet, to enjoy the love of Christ, we must reciprocate: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Imagine being greatly in debt, with no possible way to

repay what you owe. Further, imagine that someone who owes you nothing pays the debt completely, puts you in business again, and makes you his partner. Would you not love that person? Surely you would not reject that person or be ashamed of him. Yet, Christ has paid the greatest debt we could ever owe—the debt of sin. What amazing love! If you have rejected His love, what has caused your heart to become so calloused? Why not consider His love once more?

Jesus loves me He who died,
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away your sin,
Let his little child come in.

[Chorus]
Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes, Jesus loves me;
The Bible tells me so.

CHAPTER 15

Over Human Feelings

Garland Elkins

The Bible

THE BIBLE IS THE only rightful claimant to authority in Christianity. What the Bible says, is what God says. The Scriptures claim complete and final authority in all matters of faith and practice, and, because the claims have proved valid through the years, the inspired Word of God is our sole authority in religion. Paul and other New Testament writers claimed authority. Paul wrote, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). To the church at Thessalonica, he wrote:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

God is our sole authority in religion, and His Word is our rule of faith and practice. We are taught:

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21).

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all

things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever (1 Pet. 4:11).

Paul rejected visionary states of mind on which some were taking their stand (Col. 2:18); he rejected current religious philosophy which was based on human tradition (Col. 2:8); he renounced false knowledge which the Gnostics were teaching as deep mysteries (1 Tim. 6:20); and he reminded the Galatians that a perverted gospel was not an authoritative Gospel, whether taught by a man or an angel (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul maintained that, because his teaching was Divinely authoritative both in source (1 Cor. 11:23; Eph. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:10) and in content (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:7), his hearers and readers were under Divine obligation to recognize this authority.

The authority of Scripture is absolute and not merely subjective and relative, as liberals argue. Some maintain that, in faith and morals, there is no purely objective standard. Thus, in some circles, it is said "that the Bible contains the Word of God, or the Bible as a whole may become the Word of God." The former statement implies that the Bible is not necessarily the Word of God in its entirety, and the latter denies an objective authoritativeness to the Scriptures.

The Bible is authoritative in religion just as the Constitution of the United States is the basic authority of our country. It does not simply contain authority here and there in its various parts, and neither does it merely become authority if people accept it as such and abide by its principles. **It possesses an objective authoritativeness in and of itself. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.** According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Bible is complete, final, and understandable. It has been fully revealed, and everything that pertains to life and godliness is contained in the Bible (2 Pet. 1:3). Jude wrote:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Peter wrote, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3).

Human Feelings Are Not Reliable

There are many who believe the widespread error which says, "If a person is sincere, and truly believes that he is doing right, and feels good about it, that makes one right in the sight of God." Nothing could be further from the truth! Listed below are a few of the many Bible examples which prove that human feelings are not an authority in religion. Though one may feel that what he believes and feels good about makes the thing that he feels good about true, he is deceived if he believes such error.

The Case Of Joseph

Joseph was the favorite son of his father Jacob:

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him (Gen. 37:3-4).

In addition to having a coat of many colors, Joseph dreamed some dreams in which his family bowed down to him, and he told his father and his brethren about those dreams. This only intensified their hatred of him. At a later time when his brethren were in the field feeding their father's flock, Jacob sent Joseph to check on the welfare of his brethren:

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams (Gen. 37:18-20).

And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:24-28).

It is said of Joseph's brothers:

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard (Gen. 37:31-36).

Jacob truly felt that his beloved son Joseph was dead, and his sorrow was the same as it would have been if Joseph were dead. However, Joseph was alive and well, physically in Egypt!

Later, Jacob said, “And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die” (Gen. 45:28). When Jacob was upon his deathbed, he blessed Joseph and his two sons:

Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth (Gen. 48:10-16).

The Case Of The Prophet From Judah

To further expose the popular error of trusting in human feelings, call attention to the following Scripture: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

In 1 Kings 13:1-32, there is a fine story to demonstrate the principle which shows that, even though one truly

believes a lie and feels that it is right, nevertheless, one can lose his life and die in disobedience.

After Jeroboam had established himself as king of the ten tribes, he decided that, if the people continued to go to Jerusalem for worship, they would kill him and go back to King Rehoboam of Judah. Therefore he built “two calves of gold” (1 Kings 12:29).

In the course of time, Jeroboam, assuming the place of a priest, planned to burn incense upon the new altar which he had erected at Bethel. In the meantime, God appeared unto a prophet that dwelt in Judah, and ordered him to go down to Bethel and cry against that altar, and told him what to say:

And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee (1 Kings 13:2).

King Jeroboam was angry at the prophet, and he put forth his hand and commanded:

Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord (1 Kings 13:4-5).

Jeroboam then changes his attitude toward the man of God. Instead of wrath and murder in the king's heart, he has admiration for the prophet, and he now invites him home with him and offers him a great reward. The splendid man of God replied to the king:

And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in

with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel (1 Kings 13:8-10).

What a wonderful man the prophet of God was! However, there is more to the story. In Bethel, there was an old prophet of the Lord, a man who knew that Jeroboam was doing wrong, but this old prophet lacked the courage of his convictions. The old prophet did not attend Jeroboam's inaugural offering of incense, but he had some sons, and they came home and told their father what the young prophet had done. The old prophet was very eager to meet the man who had the courage to speak the truth and to condemn the wrong, even if he himself had been cowardly and lacking in the affair.

So he went after the young man and found him dismounted and under an oak tree: "Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread" (1 Kings 13:15). The young prophet explained to him that God had told him, "Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest" (1 Kings 13:17). The old prophet then said to him:

I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him (1 Kings 13:18).

The man who had been able to withstand the invitation of the king, the man who was strong enough to withstand flattery, and the man who was able to withstand the desire and greed for gold, fell upon the plausibility of a lie that was told.

The record says that the old prophet carried him back, and, while they were eating and drinking, this time God did indeed speak by the old prophet and caused him to say to the disobedient young prophet who had been deceived by a lie:

Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers (1 Kings 13:21-22).

The question often arises why God did not kill the old prophet who was guilty of the greater sin, rather than the young prophet who believed his lie. I believe that this is the explanation: the Bible teaches in many passages that all liars are guilty, and, if unrepentant, will be punished (Rev. 21:8). But the special reason for this story being written is to impress upon all the danger of **believing a lie!**

There is no doubt that the young prophet truly felt that he was doing the will of God when he believed the lie told to him by the old prophet. However, in spite of his feeling that he was doing God's will, he was, in fact, disobeying God!

The Case Of Saul Of Tarsus

The Bible, to some degree, is a book of biographies. Paul is, perhaps, the most prominent man of the New Testament, with the exception of Jesus. Most heroes are soon forgotten; however, Paul is unobscured by the lapse of centuries. He was born of a great race (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5). He was educated under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He was religious from youth (Acts 26:4-5). He was very zealous

(Gal. 1:14; Acts 22:3). He persecuted the church (Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:13). He imprisoned disciples (Acts 8:3; Acts 22:4). He compelled them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11). He voted to kill them (Acts 7:58; Acts 22:20; Acts 26:10). He persecuted Christians even to strange cities (Acts 9:1-2; Acts 26:11). However, in all of this, he was conscientious; he truly felt that he was serving God acceptably. Please observe further:

1. Paul thought that he was doing right in opposing Christ (Acts 26:9). However, as he later wrote and said, “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). He also wrote, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

2. Paul never violated his conscience: “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). Human feelings are not reliable as a standard of authority in religion.

Some additional examples show that human feelings are not an authority in religion over the Bible:

1. Cain, no doubt, felt that his unauthorized sacrifice would be acceptable to God, but God rejected it (Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12).

2. Nadab and Abihu felt that their unauthorized worship would be acceptable to God, but the Lord caused fire to devour them in their worship (Lev. 10:1-2).

3. King Saul took things into his own hands and offered a sacrifice, though he was not a priest, and though he felt that his worship would be accepted by God. God, however, rejected Saul’s worship, and Saul lost his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:1-14).

4. King Uzziah felt that God would accept his offering of incense in the temple. However, he was told that he had no right to burn incense (2 Chron. 26:18), and God struck him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:19-21).

5. Uzzah felt that he was doing right when he touched the ark of God, but we read: “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2 Sam. 6:7).

CHAPTER 16

Over The Doctrines And Commandments Of Men

Marvin Weir

Introduction

THE BIBLE MAKES IT very clear that there are only two religions from which man can choose—the religion of man or the religion of God! The statement Jesus made in Matthew 12:30 will haunt many people in the Day of Judgment. Jesus warned, “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”¹ To choose a man-made religion (any denomination) over the church of Christ (Christ’s church) places one in direct opposition to the Lord. The reason it is the church of Christ is because the church belongs to Christ. He promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18) which is His body of which He is head (Eph. 1:22-23).

Man’s religion has always been attractive and pleasing to men, but it has never been pleasing to God. Churches founded by men lack the **authority** that comes from Heaven and thus are of no benefit to one seeking to be a true worshiper of God.

The Authority Issue

God is the Creator, and man is the created. The created is never **greater** than the Creator. The prophet Isaiah observes, “But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the

work of thy hand” (Isa. 64:8). God affirms that Isaiah’s observation is correct in saying:

The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter’s hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel (Jer. 18:1-6).

Isaiah correctly notes that man has been created to glorify God (Isa. 43:7). Such being the case, the apostle Paul declares that “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

The majority of people today refuse to abide by the authority of the Scriptures because they desire to glorify themselves! Countless people prefer to do what **they** want to do in the realm of worship, and they fully intend to worship **their** way. This attitude spawns religious division and promotes denominationalism. This attitude also produces liberalism and modernism within the Lord’s church.

God’s law has been absolute and binding in every dispensation. Since God is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34), it is obvious that He communicated with both Cain and Abel regarding an offering acceptable unto Him. God had respect for Abel’s offering, “but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect” (Gen. 4:4-5). Man has never been given permission to deviate from the worship God has specified.

The Mosaical dispensation reveals the decision of two priests who chose to flaunt God’s authority:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah (Lev. 10:1-2).

There is no getting around the fact that Nadab and Abihu are killed with fire from Jehovah because they took the liberty to do that which God “had not commanded them.”

God’s will must also be honored and respected in the Christian age. Jesus makes it clear that what people **say** must agree with what He demands they **do** if they are going to be in Heaven. The Lord warns, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Again, the Master admonishes, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). The words of the apostle Paul will forever ring in the ears of those who lose their souls: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name [**by the authority**] of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17, emp. mine throughout, MW).

If we abide by the teaching of Christ, it does not allow us to be hearers and not doers of His Word (cf. Jas. 1:22). Jesus teaches that the “wise man” who hears His Word, and respects and follows it will build upon the “rock,” but that the “foolish man” who hears and does not abide by His Word builds upon the “sand” (Matt. 7:24-27). It is said that “great was the fall thereof” of the one’s house who refused to abide by a “thus saith the Lord.”

The standard of authority that we are to abide by cannot be majority rule (Matt. 7:13-14), the Pope of Roman Catholicism (Matt. 23:9), or Protestantism’s contradicting creeds (1 Cor. 1:12-13). Christ is the head of His church

which He promised to build (Matt. 16:18) and which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23), and He has been given **all** authority “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). This leaves **no** authority to any man, woman, or group of people to legislate in doctrinal matters. God’s Word has forever been “settled in heaven” (Psm. 119:89), and this leaves absolutely no room for the ever-changing synods, creeds, and councils of men.

The great battle being fought today is over the authority of the Bible. Bible authority must be understood, taught, and put into practice if we are to please the Lord. Bible authority is **not** full of comfort for those who insist upon worshiping as they please, but, for those who want to go to heaven, **it** is their refuge and source of strength.

A Bible Example Of Man-Made Religion

People today can and should learn from the things “written aforetime” (Rom. 15:4). Let us reason together for a moment and see why the Bible should be believed over the doctrines and commandments of men.

All Man-Made Religions Have Their Origin In The Human Heart

The religion of Jeroboam was a “Godless” religion. It was such because it did not come from the will of God but from the arrogant mind of man. Jeroboam did as so many do today in relying upon his heart instead of the Word of God (1 Kings 12:26). The Bible clearly warns that it is “not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23), and that “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). God’s thoughts and ways are not man’s thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:8-9); thus, there can never come from the mind of man a system of worship that pleases God.

God’s will for mankind must be revealed, and we have that revelation in His inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17;

2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). Anything that attempts to add to, take from, or substitute for God's Word is simply a perversion of truth (Gal. 1:6-9) and rebellion against God.

A Man-Made Religion Is For The Sole Purpose Of Pleasing Man Instead Of God

Jeroboam feared that, if the people went to Jerusalem and worshipped as God intended, they would again respect Rehoboam as king of Judah (1 Kings 12:26-27). Thus, Jeroboam established golden calves in Bethel and Dan to entice the people not to travel to Jerusalem to worship.

Selfishness motivated Jeroboam to offer "alternative worship" to the people, and selfishness motivated the people to accept a religion of convenience! Selfishness is what keeps denominationalism alive today as multitudes of people demand to worship in a way that pleases them.

A Man-Made Religion Pretends To Be For The Good Of The People

Jeroboam shrewdly says, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem" (1 Kings 12:28). It does not take much to convince some folks that they should do what God said not to do. Jerusalem was the place God designated for the people to worship, and Jeroboam had no right to change it.

The "attend the church of your choice" plea works today because people choose to worship as they please and ignore a "thus saith the Lord." God condemns such religious division and the souls who practice and promote it will be lost (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Man-Made Religion Is In Opposition To The Word Of God

Jeroboam lied to the people in saying, "behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). Had not God commanded His

people to refrain from making any graven images (Exod. 20:4)? It was Jehovah the Creator and not some created idol that delivered the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

Many today bemoan the truth that there is only one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:4; Eph. 5:23) while telling all who will listen why they think that many churches are wonderful. It should be obvious to one searching for truth that the one head (Christ) is not reigning over many different religious bodies. Man's thoughts are to be in harmony with the will of God (cf. 2 Kings 5:11). As one has aptly said, "The ladder **to** Heaven must come **from** Heaven" (cf. John 14:6).

Man-Made Religion Becomes A Snare To People

"And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan" (1 Kings 12:30). Jeroboam changed the object of worship from God to golden calves. It is amazing that so many are much more impressed with what they can do than with what God can do. All denominations are but an attempt to usurp the Word and power of God. Mere men did not die for the Lord's church (Acts 20:28), and the Lord certainly did not die for the churches that men establish (Psm. 127:1). Denominationalism becomes a snare to so many as they believe they are worshiping God, but in reality are engaging in that which is sinful and in opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Man-Made Religion Is Ever So Wrong But Has An Appearance Of Being Right

Jeroboam knew that he needed to keep an altar, some priests, and a feast "like unto the feast that is in Judah" (1 Kings 12:32). Did not the people worship? Was there not an outward expression of religious intent? Yes, but that not built on a legitimate and solid foundation will fail and fall (cf. Matt. 7:24-27).

Denominationalism has always mixed some truth with its error. But no religion founded by man has the authority to exist! The Bible is clear that “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). The Master spoke the truth in saying, “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). As the apostle Paul admonished, “Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Other lessons in this series of lectures will reveal the Bible to be the inerrant, inspired, and all-sufficient Word of God. The Lord Himself has declared God’s Word to be true (John 17:17). No man has the right or authority to add to or take from the Holy Scriptures (Deut. 4:1-2; Rev. 22:18-19). Thus, if the religious doctrines and commandments of men agree with the Bible, they are unnecessary, and, if they disagree with the Bible, as they usually do, they are false. When man disagrees with the Word of God, he is to be regarded as a liar and his foolish theories or speculations as damnable error (Rom. 3:4).

Time and space limitations will not permit a review of the hundreds of false doctrines and commandments of men in the realm of religion. We will, therefore, limit this discussion to false teaching that is common in the different creeds of denominational churches.

Calvinism

John Calvin receives the credit for establishing the system called “Calvinism,” but one can easily trace the false doctrine of original sin all the way back to Augustine. Thus, this popular religious error has existed long enough to firmly entrench itself in the creeds of many religious groups. The five major errors in Calvin’s system of doctrine are identified by the familiar acrostic of the word “tulip.” The building block upon which all other erroneous points

in the “tulip” rest is **total hereditary depravity**. This doctrine comes from the mind of man and teaches that all people inherit the sin of Adam. In other words, a person is born with a depraved nature, lost in sin, and unable to do **anything** to save himself. It is amazing how teaching that is contrary to God’s Word becomes so popular among the masses. But as one source notes:

Calvin’s moral power extended over all the Reformed Churches, and over several nationalities—Swiss, French, German, Polish, Bohemian, Hungarian, Dutch, English, Scotch, and American. His religious influence upon the Anglo-Saxon race in both continents is greater than that of any native Englishman, and continues to this day.²

A Sinner From Birth

A Baptist church manual teaches that man is “by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defence or excuse.”³ The Presbyterians, speaking of Adam and Eve, say:

They being the root of mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by original generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.⁴

The belief of Catholics that babies are sinful from birth is clearly stated in their Catechism. The Catechism reads:

Born with a fallen nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called.

The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.⁵

Thus, the false doctrine that babies are born sinners is popular with both Catholics and Protestants. The liberal NIV does its part in assisting the spread of this grievous error of original sin. Psalm 51:5 is the place where those of modernistic persuasion attempt to place the doctrine of original sin. The NIV reads, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Daring to be even more liberal than the RSV, the NRSV declares, "Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me." The Amplified Bible, a misnomer if there ever was one, says, "Behold, I was brought forth in [a state of] iniquity, my mother was sinful who conceived me [and I too am sinful]." The TEV reads, "I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful." The Living Bible (another misnomer) declares, "But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." The NIV also renders the Greek word *sarx* as "sinful nature" instead of "flesh" (KJV and ASV) some twenty-three times in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Peter (Rom. 7:5; Rom. 7:18; Rom. 7:25; Rom. 8:3-5; Rom. 8:8-9; Rom. 8:12-13; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 5:13; Gal. 5:16-17; Gal. 5:19; Gal. 5:24; Gal. 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:11; Col. 2:13; 2 Pet. 2:10).

With the majority of those claiming to be religious desiring a more modern version of the Bible than the ASV and KJV, it should come as no surprise the damage that these "perverted" versions have caused. The Bible is clear in stating that the child shall not bear the sin of the parent nor the parent the sin of the child (Ezek. 18:20). Jesus teaches that little children are sinless in saying, "Suffer

the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).

Human beings are the offspring of God (Acts 17:28-29) and were created in His image or after His likeness (Gen. 1:26). Does God have a "sinful nature" that we inherit from Him? Absolutely not! The doctrine of original sin or hereditary total depravity comes from the mind of man and not from the Word of God. An accurate translation of Psalm 51:5 shows that David's mother did the conceiving in sin. The ASV reads, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." The Scriptures simply state that David was born of an adulterous relationship into a sinful family.

If a baby is not born a sinner (and he is not), there is no reason to practice "infant baptism." An infant cannot believe or repent and thus cannot be scripturally baptized (Mark 16:16). Actually, an infant does not need to repent, since he is not capable of transgressing God's law (1 John 3:4). The wise man is correct in stating, "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29).

Unconditional Election

The **Westminster Confession Of Faith** says, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."⁶ The Westminster creed further states:

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or

causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.⁷

If, as Calvinism teaches, one is dead in sin and cannot respond to God, then Jehovah must arbitrarily choose him for salvation. Such warped thinking places the blame for one's being lost squarely upon God's shoulders! Yet the Holy Scriptures tell us "that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). The Bible also notes that God "would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Peter affirms the same in saying, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Why mention obedience as being mandatory for one to be saved (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9), if God has, even before the world began, selected those who are to be saved and those who are to be lost? This damnable teaching is in direct opposition to the plea of Christ. The Master says:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

Limited Atonement

Calvin did not teach that Christ's atonement is limited in its power to save, but that it is limited to the arbitrary number that God chose to be saved from the beginning. This tenet of Calvin's doctrine is necessary if one believes in "unconditional election." According to the false doctrine of Calvinism, Christ died only for the **elect**, but the Scriptures teach that He died for all men.

First, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Did God love the entire world or only the so-called “elect”? Does the word “whosoever” include everyone or only the so-called “elect”? Who can believe that the words “world” and “whosoever” refer only to a select few? Second, Jesus Christ, Who is our mediator, “gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). Third, the Holy Scriptures emphatically state of Jesus that “by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). Fourth, God’s Word again affirms that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Calvin’s teaching of “limited atonement” contradicts the truth of God’s Word (John 17:17).

Irresistible Grace

The **Westminster Confession Of Faith** teaches:

God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect; and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins and rise again for their justification; nevertheless they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.⁸

Calvin teaches that this “elect” group of people can do nothing to save themselves; therefore, God must overwhelm and save them with a direct operation of the Holy Spirit that cannot be resisted. The Bible once again begs to disagree.

First, human hearts (minds) are pricked by hearing the Word of God (Acts 2:37)—not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit! Second, every person is **called** by God and by the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), not by a supernatural working of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:14). Third, it is true that one must be **drawn** to the Father, but **how** is this accomplished? Jesus says:

No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

The apostle Paul affirms that God's power to save is through the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), and then later records:

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:13-15).

Fourth, the Bible teaches that "it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Fifth, the Bible makes it clear that "[h]e that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). There is something one must do to save himself (Acts 2:40)—namely, obey the Gospel and then continue to live according to God's will. One can reject God's saving grace by refusing to be submissive and obedient to the Word. The Scriptures teach:

the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:11-12).

Perseverance Of The Saints

According to the **Westminster Confession Of Faith:**

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the

state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their perseverance, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.⁹

Many people who approach the doctrines of unconditional election, limited atonement, or irresistible grace somewhat differently from Calvin still firmly believe in the perseverance of the saints. This teaching is also known as the "impossibility of apostasy," or "once saved, always saved." The idea is that, once a person is saved, he cannot sin so as to be lost. The Baptist church manual states their belief a little differently from the Presbyterians in saying:

We believe that such only are real believers as endure to the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special providence watches over their welfare, and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.¹⁰

One may read the Baptist creed and make the argument that they take a “softer” stance than the one taken by the Presbyterians. Sam Morris, who was pastor of a Baptist church in Stamford, Texas leaves no doubt as to what Baptists believe regarding the “impossibility of apostasy.” In his tract entitled **Do A Christian’s Sins Damn His Soul?**, he says:

We take the position that a Christian’s sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul.¹¹

Morris just speaks much plainer than most in declaring that one can commit the vilest of sins and not jeopardize his eternal security. In fact, his position is that “a child of God” can actually die while committing a sin and his soul will be saved.

Did not Paul warn the Hebrew brethren that they could fall away from the living God (Heb. 3:12)? In fact, the brethren at Galatia **did** what many today contend cannot be done. The Bible says, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Can one fall from God’s grace and goodness and lose his soul? Absolutely! Paul admonished the Roman brethren, “Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God’s goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22). Many followers of Calvin’s doctrine, however, go to great lengths to “explain away” the numerous references in the New Testament that clearly teach that a child of God can fall from grace and lose his soul. One only needs to turn to the book of 2 Peter to find an answer to their damnable doctrine that they cannot “climb over, dig under, or go around.” The inspired words of Peter totally destroy the false doctrine of “once saved, always saved.” Peter says:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

So many people today want to enjoy both sin and salvation. People do not like to give up or turn from sinful things that bring them pleasure. Multitudes have convinced themselves that they will be recipients of God's grace, no matter what they do in this life. Paul answers this false notion by saying, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2). Salvation is **in** Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). It follows that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). One cannot return to the old man of sin and expect to receive eternal life.

"Faith Only"

The **Methodist Discipline** states a doctrine that is held by most religious groups today. It says in its "Articles of Religion":

[W]e are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.¹²

The Baptists chose Dr. L. S. Ballard, a seasoned and outstanding debater, to represent them in a debate with

our brother Thomas B. Warren on the plan of salvation. Dr. Ballard affirmed the proposition that “the Scriptures teach that faith in Christ procures salvation without further acts of obedience.”¹³

Most denominations believe that a person is saved when he believes that Jesus is the Son of God and accepts the Lord as his personal Savior. Thus, they teach that a person is saved by “faith only.” Any student of the Word of God who is willing to acknowledge truth knows that one is saved by faith. The difference between believing one is saved by faith and believing that one is saved **only** by faith is the difference between heaven and hell.

The devil must be jubilant knowing that the majority of mankind believes that they are saved **only** by faith. This so-called faith that we reference is a faith that does not **act**. The one who possesses such faith contends that man can do nothing to save himself. If man can do nothing to save himself, then that man’s so-called faith cannot be put into action.

Does faith require that I believe in God (Heb. 11:6)? Does faith require that I repent of my sins (Luke 13:3)? Does faith require that I confess my belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10)? Does faith require me to be baptized for the remission of my sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16) in order to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27)? Yes, a faith that **acts** is an **obedient** faith. An obedient faith is essential in becoming a child of God. One who refuses to obey the Gospel plan of salvation does not have faith in the Word of God.

The book of James challenges those who are Christians to think seriously about their faith. The inspired writer says, “Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith” (Jas. 2:18). One cannot rightly **claim** to have faith and then not **demonstrate** that faith. Faith in action is depicted

throughout the Bible. Man **acts** upon that which he believes in order to **prove** his faith and trust in God. The following incidents and Scriptures should help us remember that we are to prove our faith.

First, we have the incident involving Abraham and the son of promise, Isaac:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And he said, **Take now thy son**, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and **get thee into the land of Moriah**. And **offer him** there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and **went unto the place** of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and **I and the lad will go yonder**; and **we will worship**, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. And they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son. So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of. And **Abraham built the altar** there, and **laid the wood** in order, and **bound Isaac his son**, and **laid him on the altar**, upon the wood. And **Abraham stretched forth his hand**, and **took the knife** to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him. For **now I know that**

thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me (Gen. 22:1-12).

Who will argue that Abraham proved that he feared God **only** by faith? Who will deny that Abraham **proved** his faith by acts of obedience?

Second, God's inspired penman, James, clearly proves that saving faith is an obedient faith. James says:

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so **faith, if it have not works, is dead** in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: **show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith.** Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the **demons also believe**, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that **by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.** And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so **faith apart from works is dead** (Jas. 2:14-26).

Third, the inspired writer in Hebrews 11 pens:

1. By faith Abel **offered** (Heb. 11:4).
2. By faith Noah...**moved** with godly fear, prepared an ark (Heb. 11:7).

3. By faith Abraham...**obeyed** to go out...he **went** out (Heb. 11:8).
4. By faith Abraham...**offered** up Isaac (Heb. 11:17).
5. By faith [Moses] **forsook** Egypt (Heb. 11:27).
6. By faith [Moses] **kept** the passover (Heb. 11:28).
7. By faith [the Israelites] **passed through** the Red Sea (Heb. 11:29).
8. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been **compassed about for seven days** (Heb. 11:30).

We must prove our faith, and we do such by **doing** what God has commanded us to do. Surely one who is not biased or prejudiced can see the truth that a faith that will not act upon what God has said to do is a **dead** faith. A **dead** faith that refuses to act upon God's Word is not a **saving** faith!

“Grace Only”

The grace of God has brought salvation to all men (Tit. 2:11). If the doctrine of “grace only” is true, then **all** men will be saved. No exceptions! Such a doctrine makes Jesus a liar in saying:

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

The truth must be taught that God's grace is not mutually exclusive to His law. It is foolish for one to argue that the Old Testament was all law and the New Testament is all grace. It is true that “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17), but this notes the means and manner by which the Old and New Testaments were delivered to man. Long

before the New Testament, “Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of Jehovah” (Gen. 6:8). It was by God’s grace that He promised a victorious Messiah (Gen. 3:15). God’s grace is seen in telling Abraham that in him “shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

God’s grace has never negated obedience to His commands! It is a futile attempt to try and make Paul’s statement in Romans 6:15 teach that compliance with any command or condition the Lord has set forth is legalistic and wrong. Paul says, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid” (Rom. 6:15). The apostle’s statement is necessarily limited by the context in which it is made or else Christians are a lawless people. But remember that Paul has earlier taught that “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15)! Since sin is defined in the Scriptures as “lawlessness” (ASV) or “transgression of the law” (KJV) in 1 John 3:4, one must be under law, or he could not sin. The Bible speaks of “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25) and the “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

To say that one is saved “wholly by grace,”¹⁴ as the Baptist manual affirms, contradicts numerous Scriptures. One will not get to heaven by simply crying “Lord, Lord,” and then refusing to do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21). It is true that we are saved by God’s grace, but not “wholly by grace” or by “grace only.” The Holy Scriptures say:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him (1 John 2:4-5).

The following points clearly show the fallacy of the “grace only” doctrine.¹⁵

1. Grace does not negate obedience (Acts 10:34-35; Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Rom. 6:17-18)! One who loves the

Lord will keep His commandments (John 14:15). It is to no avail to call the Savior Lord and refuse to do that which He says to do (Luke 6:46).

2. Grace does not overlook ignorance! “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30). One is not lost because of a lack of grace but because he or she is separated from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2).

3. God’s abundant grace does not mean all people will be saved! The Lord teaches that most people will be eternally lost (Matt. 7:13-14). God’s grace provides for the salvation of every person, but each individual must choose to appropriate such grace by an **obedient faith**.

4. God’s grace does not mean that we as His children have nothing to do! One will never please God by ignoring works of obedience. The Bible makes this clear in saying, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).

5. The grace of God **never** makes a wrong thing right! People who choose to practice sin will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8).

6. God’s grace does not exclude obeying the Gospel! No one can be saved who refuses to be “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:4). Baptism is not the **only** act of obedience that is required to become a child of God, but it is the final act of obedience whereby one does “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

God’s grace saves man by providing a plan that no mere man could devise, but man saves himself by complying completely with God’s plan. In regard to salvation, one will lose his soul if one attempts to do only that which God can do or leaves for God to do that which he must do for himself.

Imputed Righteousness Of Christ

The Baptist manual teaches:

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God.¹⁶

Righteousness is an attribute that belongs to character, and the character of one person cannot be imputed to another person. Just as the sins of one is not imputed to another, neither is the righteousness of one imputed to another. The man to whom God imputes sin is a man who is living in sin. The man to whom God imputes or credits with being righteous is the man who is obeying God and "walking in the light" (Rom. 4:6-8; 1 John 1:7). Adam's sin is not imputed to us, and neither is Christ's righteousness imputed to us. It is as Ezekiel said: "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). The point is well made that the doctrine of Christ's righteousness being imputed to another

discredits the gospel as God's saving power, and belittles the merits and efficacy of the blood of Christ, for it teaches that some corruption remains in the regenerate, but he is counted righteous because he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ.¹⁷

Baptism Is Not Necessary For Salvation

Those who believe in "faith only" do not believe that baptism is necessary for one to be saved. The Baptists have long taught that baptism is **not** a step of salvation

but that it is necessary for church membership. Baptism becomes a testimony that one has already received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

What must one do to be saved? The question depends where one is on the road to salvation. Upon hearing Peter's sermon, the people on Pentecost asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter answered, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). These people were told this because "[e]xcept one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Saul of Tarsus was finally told by Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Notice that the washing away of sins occurred after baptism—not before! Baptism is the act of obedience that enables one to "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Peter, in alluding to the fact that Noah and his family "were saved through water" (1 Pet. 3:20), says that "after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism" (1 Pet. 3:21).

Mode Of Baptism

The Nazarene **Articles Of Faith** declares, "Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant."¹⁸ The Bible never gives one the choice of **how** he desires to be baptized. In fact, the Greek word *baptizo* means "to dip, immerse, or submerge"¹⁹; thus, immersion instead of baptism is a better translation of the original word.

The Holy Scriptures make clear the meaning of the word *baptizo*. John, forerunner of the Christ, "was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:23). Much water is not needed for sprinkling, and the

people came to John because John could not carry the amount of water needed for immersion to them. When Philip baptized the eunuch, “they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38). Baptism is clearly defined as a burial (Rom. 6:4). Neither man or animal is considered buried today when only a few grains of soil is sprinkled over them. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, the one being baptized is raised so he “might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

The baptism of one’s choice is as deadly as the church of one’s choice. The Bible makes it very clear that there is only “**one** body...**one** faith...**one** baptism” (Eph. 4:4-5). Brethren and friends, you and I do not get to **choose** in matters where God has legislated. This is the crux of the matter. The authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18) and the truthfulness of His Word (John 17:17) must be respected.

Biblical Principles That Will Benefit Us Today

The Old Testament Scriptures “were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). Let us note some principles found in 1 Kings 18 that will be of benefit to us today.

The Religion Of Man Comes In Many Forms And Has Many Followers

Elijah was one man seeking to serve God, but Baal’s false prophets numbered 450. The odds always seem to be in favor of Satan and the world. A depraved religion will always attract and pacify an immoral and depraved humanity. It was Barabbas, the notorious murderer and insurrectionist, whom the morally corrupt Jews wanted released instead of the Christ (Matt. 27:21). Today, Christ is crucified afresh, as people pledge their allegiance to man-made churches and scoff at the Lord’s church.

The false prophets of Baal were zealous to their religion as they “cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them” (1 Kings 18:28). Today, many are zealous to **their** religion as they devoutly defend worship that is not authorized by the Scriptures. The apostle Paul rightly describes those who refuse to be guided by a “thus saith the Lord” as those who

have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:2-3).

Earnestness without humble submission and obedience to the Word of God is in vain.

The followers of Baal were deceived and so are those today who follow men instead of Christ. The disciples of Baal cried out, “but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded” (1 Kings 18:29). The Lord will not answer or regard those today who are worshiping in religious error. Christ said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (Matt. 15:13-14).

The Religion God Authorizes Is Unique And Has Few Followers

Elijah thought that he was all alone in seeking to do the will of God, but it was revealed to him that there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal (1 Kings 19:18; cf. Rom. 11:4). Elijah was not alone in his struggle to worship according to God’s will, and neither are we alone today in our struggle to worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Compared to the followers of false teachers, however, followers of righteousness are

indeed few in number. Being unpopular and in the minority must never deter those who value their souls from doing what is godly and right.

Every Person While In This Life Must Decide Whom He Will Follow

There are two opinions to choose between—God’s and man’s. The Bible tells us that these two opinions are as wide apart as daylight and darkness. The Scriptures declare:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

How much more clearly can God state that what man “thinks” and “feels” does not matter when it comes to acceptable worship and service?

Conclusion

The question of 1 Kings 18:21 is appropriate to ask of people today: “How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” The principle today is this: “If Christ be the founder of **the** church, follow Him; but if men are the legitimate and scriptural founders of **the** church, then follow them.”

Salvation is **in** Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:10)—not some man! All will be judged by the Word of Christ and not by the word of men. Most today must be convinced that John 12:48 reads like this: “It does not matter if one rejects Christ and receives not his sayings, he will be judged by the creeds, opinions, and feelings of men.” What a contrast with what the Bible teaches! Jesus says, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth

him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Will you choose the religion of man or the religion of God? The destiny of your soul depends on the choice you make!

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

2 Philip Schaff, **History Of The Christian Church**, Volume 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 806.

3 J. M. Pendleton, **Church Manual Designed For The Use of Baptist Churches**, Art. III (Nashville: Convention Press, 1955), p. 46.

4 **Westminster Confession Of Faith**, Ch. VI, Art. III & IV, http://wikisource.org/wiki/Westminster_Confession_of_Faith.

5 “Who Can Receive Baptism: The Baptism Of Infants,” **Catechism Of The Catholic Church**, Art. IV, No. 1250 (<http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm#VI>).

6 **Westminster Confession Of Faith**, Ch. III, Art. III,

7 Ibid, Ch. III, Art. IV

8 Ibid, Ch. XI, Art. IV

9 Ibid, Ch. XVII, Art. I-III.

10 Pendleton, Art. XI, p. 54.

11 Sam Morris, **Do A Christian’s Sins Damn His Soul?**

12 **Doctrines and Disciplines of the Methodist Church**, Art. IX (Nashville: Methodist Publishing, 1956), p. 29.

13 L. S. Ballard & Thomas B. Warren, **Warren-Ballard Debate On The Plan Of Salvation** (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1979), p. 1.

14 Pendleton, Art. IV, p. 47.

15 Although these points are in a sermon outline of mine, I am certain that all of them are not original with me. I do not remember the source for giving proper credit.

16 Pendleton, Art. V, p. 48.

17 Robertson L. Whiteside, **A New Commentary On Paul’s Letter To The Saints At Rome** (Denton, TX: Miss Inys Whiteside, 1969), pp. 98-99.

18 **Articles Of Faith**, Art. XII, http://www.nazarene.org/gensec/we_believe.html.

19 See **Thayer’s** or **Strong’s**.

CHAPTER 17

Over The Traditions Of The Roman Catholic Church

Don Walker

Opening Comments

IT IS OUR HONORED privilege to be able to participate in the production of this volume and to present this material in the accompanying lectureship. We are truly impressed with Brother B. J. Clarke and this fine congregation and consider both to be dear friends of Truth and of ours. The standard and the quality of work performed have constantly been set high and reached each year. For your immeasurable work in the kingdom, we are grateful and express our deepest thanks. May our God continue to bless all as you labor for His cause and for His people.

Introduction

As New Testament Christians, we claim that we are the New Testament church which originated in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. Our proclamation is that you can read of the church of Christ in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. We also emphasize that the Bible is our sole guide on our trek to please our God and go to heaven.

The Catholic church also claims to be the New Testament church which originated in Acts 2 on the Day

of Pentecost. They, too, claim that you can read of the Catholic church in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. **McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia** records the following, under the heading of "Roman Catholic church":

The Catholic historian begins the history of his Church with the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. While living on this earth, he gathered around him those who were to rule the Church after his ascension. He provided for a complete organization of the Church by designating Peter as its head. The foundation of the Church was externally completed on the day of Pentecost by the effusion of the Holy Spirit. Several Church fathers have called this day the birthday of the Christian Church; accordingly the Catholic historian claims it as the actual beginning of the Catholic church.¹

So it is we see the Catholic church making the same claim as the church of Christ in these two areas. Yet we realize that simply to make a claim does not substantiate the claim. Since there is such a discrepancy of practice and teaching between the church of Christ and the Roman Catholic church, both claims cannot be valid. At least one is wrong and possibly both.

Be that as it may, we note, for the purpose of our study, this is where the claims cease to be similar. Where the New Testament church, the church of Christ, claims that the Bible is her sole guide, the Catholic church makes no such claim. In fact, the Catholic church would ridicule that statement as being silly and against what the Bible itself teaches. Notice the following quote:

Protestants claim the Bible is the only rule of faith, meaning that it contains all of the material one needs for theology and that this material is sufficiently clear that one does not need apostolic tradition or the Church's magisterium (teaching authority) to help one understand it. In the

Protestant view, the whole of Christian truth is found within the Bible's pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply non-authoritative, unnecessary, or wrong—and may well hinder one in coming to God.

Catholics, on the other hand, recognize that the Bible does not endorse this view and that, in fact, it is repudiated in Scripture. The true “rule of faith”—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly.²

Basically, there are two issues which must be addressed in our assignment. (1) Does Scripture provide us completely? (2) Can we understand Scripture without the help of Catholic tradition? Members of the Lord's church would answer both questions with a resounding “Yes!” Catholics on the other hand say, “Absolutely not!”

Defining Our Terms

In beginning, there is a term with which we must familiarize ourselves. That term is “*Sola Scriptura*.” It simply means Scripture only. Where the Lord's church recognizes the Bible as its sole authority, the Catholic church denies such a claim. We would see the Bible as the final court of appeals for matters of faith and practice here on earth, where the Catholic position would be that the Bible, along with apostolic or church tradition, would be the final court of appeal.

In the Stevens-Beevers Debate conducted on the nights of May 13th through May 16th, 1952 at Stillwater, Oklahoma, in his very first negative speech, under the proposition, “The New Testament Is the Supreme Authority in the Christian Religion,” Mr. Beevers stated that his and Mr. Stevens' purpose was “to present to you people here the fundamental difference between

Catholicism and all forms of Protestantism.”³ He went on to say these words:

And that fundamental difference is this: What is the supreme authority, the last court of appeal, in the Church founded by Jesus Christ? Mr. Stevens replies, “The New Testament and that alone.” I say, “No! The living voice of the living Church founded by Jesus Christ and teaching in His name and with His authority all peoples in all ages until He shall come again.”⁴

Mr. Beevers was correct when he observed that recognition of the supreme authority is a fundamental difference between the Lord’s church⁵ and the Catholic church.

Again another Catholic writer has these words to consider: “Is Scripture the sole rule of faith? Not according to the Bible. While we must guard against merely human tradition, the Bible makes clear the necessity of clinging to apostolic Tradition.”⁶ It becomes evident that the Catholic church does not accept the premise that the Bible is adequate in furnishing each child of God all he needs for spiritual maturity and to be pleasing to God.

Understanding The Catholic’s View When Denying “*Sola Scriptura*”

It is important that we understand the Catholic views concerning this matter. It should be understood that Catholics are not always agreed concerning exactly what is meant by the “traditions.” Geisler and MacKenzie make this observation:

Catholics are not all agreed on their understanding of the relation of tradition to Scripture. Some understand it as two sources of revelation. Others understand apostolic tradition as a lesser form of revelation. Still others understand tradition in an almost Protestant way, namely, as merely an interpretation of revelation

(albeit, an infallible one) that is found only in the Bible. Traditional Catholics, such as Ludwig Ott and Henry Denzinger, tend to be in the first category, and more modern Catholics, such as John Henry Newman and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in the latter.⁷

The more traditional view is that there are two sources of revelation that stand as the final court of appeals concerning a Christian's character and life. One would be the Bible while the other would be tradition. Again we read from Geisler and MacKenzie these words:

The language of the Council of Trent seems to favor the traditional understanding. It claimed, for example, that "this truth and instruction are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come down to us." Consequently, Trent "receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection or piety and reverence all the books of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author of both, and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit." Indeed, in Denzinger's "Systematic Index" he speaks of "the Sources [plural] of Revelation": "The written source of revelation is the canonical books of both Testaments...Another source of revelation is ecclesiastical tradition." The original draft of Trent left no doubt it intended two sources of revelation, speaking of the gospel being contained "partly in written books, partly in unwritten tradition." This, however, was changed at the last minute, omitting the word "partly" in both cases. Many post-Vatican II Catholic scholars claim it is improper to speak of two sources of revelation, since the "De Verbum" [the Word] document speaks of "a single sacred deposit of the Word of God." This is not an infallible pronouncement, however, and it leaves

it undefined as to whether each may contain elements not found in the other. The debate continues as to whether the words “partly” were omitted from Trent’s declaration for theological or stylistic reasons.⁸

The less traditional view, on the other hand, sees the Scriptures and tradition containing the same revelation. Tradition in their mind simply helps one to understand better the revelation of God found in Scripture:

David Wells provides a good summary of the new (more progressive) view: “1) There is only one source of revelation, not two; 2) Scripture and tradition both mediate this common revelation; 3) Scripture and tradition can never be in conflict since they arise from the same source of revelation; 4) Scripture is generically no different in nature from tradition since both contain and communicate the same revelation, but it is more important.” Wells likens the Catholic belief in the relation of Scripture and tradition to that of two eyes. “The second eye adds no new knowledge of the outside world to that brought by the first eye, but with the two eyes the world is perceived with greater clarity than with one.”⁹

Though Catholics differ concerning exactly what the tradition is, they both agree that it is essential and infallible.

An article dated September 2002, by Wayne Jackson, appeared on the **Christian Courier** website. The article was entitled, “*Sola Scriptura*: A Response To A Catholic Writer.” A request was made to Brother Jackson to comment concerning an article written by Mr. James Akin, a “senior apologist” for **Catholic Answers**. In this article by Wayne Jackson, which was the result of that request, he makes three observations concerning misguided Catholic belief concerning Scripture. Brother Jackson writes:

First, it is contended that the sixty-six books of our common Bibles do not contain the whole of

the collection of divine writings. Hence, Catholic Bibles are appended with several extra books—known as the Apocrypha...

Second, Catholic authorities allege that the common person cannot understand the Word of God. There needs to be, therefore, a “clergy” to instruct the “lay” person in terms of what he is to believe and practice...

Third, Catholicism contends that the canonical Scriptures were never intended to be the **final** body of authority in determining God’s truth for humanity. Rather, it is argued, “the Bible is not the only source of faith...but is a dead letter.”¹⁰

In the referenced article by Mr. James Akin entitled “The Practical Problems of *Sola Scriptura*,” he presents seven “problems.” Though we will not address all of the seven problems mentioned in this article (choosing rather to address only two of Mr. Akin’s problems along with arguments found in other sources), we do wish to list those mentioned to give a taste of the hermeneutic and the type of arguments made to support such claims.

1. Most Christians had no access to the Scriptures before the invention of the printing press; hence, the idea of *sola scriptura* cannot obtain where there is no widespread availability of the New Testament documents.

2. Even when the Bible became available, copies were so expensive that few could afford them.

3. In those early days, few could read; and so the Scriptures alone would do them little good. The voice of the church thus was needed additionally.

4. Unlearned people do not have access to “scholarly” sources; thus, whatever knowledge they have is most likely flawed.

5. Hard-working folks have little time for study, and so they need someone to tell them what to believe.

6. Through much of Christian history, people have had improper diets. This lack of nutrition resulted in their brains being unable to function critically. Hence, they could not draw rational deductions from studying the Bible alone.

7. A high level of critical skill is necessary for interpreting the Scriptures, and, as most folks do not possess such skill, common sense would dictate that church officials do their thinking for them.

In all honesty, this illustrates part of the problem with the view of “latter day revelation,” whether it is the Mormon’s various books, the “small still voice in the night” of our denominational friends, or the Catholic’s claim of “apostolic or church tradition” to be perpetrated through the centuries. Without an objective standard to measure the accuracy of statements, you end up with all sorts of fanciful ideas that border on, at the least, and at times travel far beyond the hilarious.

We will now use this as a springboard for our topic, “Why should I believe the Bible over the traditions of the Roman Catholic church?”

Reason #1: The Bible Does Not Teach What The Catholic Church Teaches Concerning Traditions

The Catholic church claims to believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. They claim that it is the Word of God. They just do not believe it to be the sole authority for our lives today. It must take its place among the other authorities in the church. The traditions of the church, or apostolic tradition and the Pope, stand above the authority of Scripture in the eyes of Catholics. In fact, as is the case with the Mormons, who also claim to believe in the Bible along with the **Pearl Of Great Price, The Doctrine And**

The Covenants, and the **Book Of Mormon**, the Bible stands in a distant last place on the authority scale. The Catholic claim is that the Bible endorses such a view. In an article entitled “Scripture And Tradition,” the author writes:

Catholics, on the other hand, recognize that the Bible does not endorse this view [*Sola Scriptura*, DW] and that, in fact, it is repudiated in Scripture. The true “rule of faith”—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly.¹¹

One argument used by the Catholics is to claim that the Bible’s use of the word “tradition” has reference to their teaching on “church or apostolic tradition.” It would be foolish on our part to deny that the Bible teaches that some tradition is to be followed. However, we also must be aware that there is also some tradition that not only will lead us further away from God, but will also condemn our souls to a Devil’s hell. Of the fourteen references to “tradition” or “traditions,” twelve of them are spoken of in a negative light. In Matthew 15:2-3 and Matthew 15:6, Jesus speaks of the religious leaders making the “commandment of God of none effect by **your** tradition.” Again, Mark records for us the very same point made by our Saviour. Jesus charged the religious leaders:

For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition (Mark 7:8-9).

Other passages, such as Colossians 2:8, 1 Peter 1:18, and Galatians 1:14 all speak of the traditions of men that not only oppose God’s Word, but make it null and void.

On the other hand, we see that the Apostle Paul used the word in a positive sense in his epistle to the Thessalonians. Paul wrote:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 Thess. 3:6).

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thess. 2:15).

It is significant to note that the tradition that Paul references here is tradition he “received” (past tense). The same is true when he wrote concerning the “traditions which ye have been taught.” Again, we note the past tense that is used here. There is nowhere any indication in Scripture that “tradition” would be continually revealed and updated through the years, as the Catholic church teaches. In fact, there is nowhere indicated in Scripture that there would be any “apostolic succession” carried out through the years.

It is really quite interesting to listen to most of the argumentation presented by the Catholic church concerning these points. The authority that is usually referenced to prove church or apostolic tradition is not Scripture at all, but rather it is church or apostolic tradition that serves as their authority. Basically, the argument is “I am the final authority, and if you don’t believe me, just ask me!” The point is this: just because the Bible mentions “tradition” in a positive light does not mean that the “tradition” of which Paul spoke is the same as what the Catholic church teaches. It just does not measure up.

Another passage that is employed to try to prove the “apostolic succession” position of the Catholic church is found in 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul wrote, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same

commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” One Catholic apologist writes:

To make sure that the apostolic Tradition would be passed down after the deaths of the apostles, Paul told Timothy, “What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). He refers to the first four generations of apostolic succession—his own generation, Timothy’s, the generation Timothy will teach, and the generation next in turn.¹²

This is an interesting example of how a false doctrine is fabricated. Look at the claims of the previous statement alongside 2 Timothy 2:2, and see what all has been added into the text or simply assumed by the writer. First he introduces “apostolic Tradition,” which Paul says absolutely nothing about in this text or any other for that matter. Second, he speaks of apostolic Tradition being “passed down after the deaths of the apostles.”

Is that what Paul said, or has that been added to the thought of the Apostle Paul? Paul’s telling Timothy to teach what he had learned from a genuine apostle to others that they may also teach does not in any way translate to “an uninterrupted line of apostolic succession, teaching various and new traditions through the centuries.” It just does not add up from this passage. This is one of the reasons why men should accept the Bible **over** the traditions of the Catholic church: the passages they use to prove such simply do not teach what they claim they teach.

Reason #2: The Arguments Presented By Catholic Apologists, Particularly Mr. Akin, Have No Foundation In Scripture And Cannot Stand The Test Of Reason

Notice the first two arguments that were presented by Mr. Akin. His first two arguments were as follows:

1. Most Christians had no access to the Scriptures before the invention of the printing press, hence, the idea of *sola scriptura* cannot obtain where there is no widespread availability of the New Testament documents.
2. Even when the Bible became available, copies were so expensive that few could afford them.

We readily admit that revelation is not presented in the same fashion today as it was in the first century. However, this does not necessarily mean that men did not have access to God's Word throughout the centuries. In the first century, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). In fact, the miracles of the first century accompanied the teaching to "confirm the word" (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4). The Apostle Paul wrote that the miraculous would come to an end when "the perfect" was come:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The "in part" is identified by Paul in this context as the revelation being distributed in a miraculous way. The "perfect" has to coincide with the "in part." The language demands such a conclusion. Thus, when Paul speaks of the "perfect," he is speaking of completed revelation. The Greek word translated "perfect" is *teleios*. It means complete, of full age, or perfect. It is that which is completed by a process. When completed revelation came into existence around the close of the first century, the need for miracles confirming the Word ceased. Notice that the "perfect revelation" is that revelation which is complete, of full age, or perfect. It is that revelation which was completed by a process.

Paul taught the same Divine truth in Ephesians 4. Paul wrote of Jesus Christ, “He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:8). The gifts he references here are the miraculous gifts introduced in 1 Corinthians 12. In Ephesians 4:11, he lists those who would benefit the church by using these miraculous gifts. He said, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” As Paul continues, he explains “what would be accomplished” and “when this system would cease”:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13).

Paul taught us that it would cease when “we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [complete, or full grown, DW] man, unto the measure of the fullness of Christ.” All of this speaks of full and completed revelation. There would be no “apostolic succession,” nor would there be “the living voice of the living Church,”¹³ as Mr. Beevers claimed in his debate with Brother Stevens. Completed revelation would be given around the close of the first century.

From that point, it would be gathered and collected to provide God’s Word in a permanent, written form. Complete revelation was available toward the end of the first century. The claim that the Word of God was not available until the invention of the printing press is contrary to Scripture itself and even stands against reason. Have folks overlooked the significance of the fact that the first production off of Gutenberg’s printing press was “the Bible”? If it did not exist until then, how was it the first production from the press? If it was lost in the “dark ages,”

then how was it published from the press? It simply does not make sense. In answering this argument, Brother Jackson makes a powerful observation:

One must also remember that in earlier times, when printed materials were not so readily available, people relied upon the memory faculty of the human mind much more than is the case today. Sufficient gospel truth for redemption, therefore, was spread abroad—even before the New Testament records were completed. As the New Testament documents were produced, and began to be circulated, numerous copies were made, and vast quantities of those were committed to memory. To suggest, then, that the pattern for New Testament belief and practice was unknown in those early ages is to contradict known historical facts.

But reflect on the following data which suggest a widespread distribution of the Scriptures.

Polycarp, who lived in Smyrna (Asia Minor) around A.D. 70-155/60, in his small epistle to the Philippians, quoted from, or alluded to, no fewer than thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Origen (A.D. c. 185-254), whose work was done principally in Alexandria and Caesarea, produced hundreds of writings pertaining to the Bible. In his various works there are more than 5,700 quotations from the New Testament.

Tertullian (A.D. c. 160-220), who lived in Africa, quoted the New Testament more than 3,000 times in his various writings.

This sort of evidence could be multiplied many times over. Bruce Metzger, one of the foremost textual critics of our time, has observed that the New Testament quotations from the “church fathers” are so extensive that if the New Testament were destroyed entirely, it could be reconstructed from these sources alone.¹⁴

Catholics and others who want to cast a shadow of doubt upon the Scriptures may claim that they were unavailable or lost through the centuries, but a consideration of historical facts proclaims that this is just not true.

Reason # 3: The Catholics' Claim Is In Glaring Contradiction To Scripture Itself

Paul the apostle wrote:

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Whatever Scripture is, it is all that is needed “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” One writer tries to negate the power of this passage by claiming that it has been taken out of context to prove that the Bible is our sole authority. Note the following quote:

Furthermore, Protestants typically read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 out of context. When read in the context of the surrounding passages, one discovers that Paul’s reference to Scripture is only part of his exhortation that Timothy take as his guide Tradition and Scripture. The two verses immediately before it state: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he has learned for two reasons: first, because he knows from whom he has learned it—Paul himself—and second, because he has been educated in the scriptures. The first of these is a direct appeal to apostolic tradition, the oral teaching which the apostle Paul had given Timothy. So Protestants must take 2 Timothy 3:16-17 out of context to arrive at the theory of sola scriptura. But when the passage is read in context, it becomes clear that it is teaching the importance of apostolic tradition!¹⁵

To the simple and unlearned, this may appear to be a legitimate argument. However, did Paul really say in this passage that he was adding apostolic tradition to the Scriptures, or did he simply make reference to the fact that he, an apostle of Jesus Christ who wrote and spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had taught the truths contained in Scripture to Timothy? When we do consider the context, we note that Paul's teaching of Scripture was contrasted with the false doctrine coming from other men (see 2 Tim. 3:13ff).

Another passage that must be considered is 2 Peter 1:3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Notice the past tense that Peter employs as he speaks of "**all things** that pertain unto life and godliness." There would be no church traditions through the centuries that would equip men to life and godliness, for there would be no need.

Another passage contradicted by the false teaching of the Catholic church is found in Galatians 1:6-10:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that stands as our standard of authority. It does not matter if an apostle of Jesus Christ or an angel from heaven contradicts it: we are to follow the Gospel. Scripture itself tells us that the "gospel of your

salvation” is “the word of truth” which the Ephesians had heard. They heard it in the first century. The Gospel is the “doctrine which was delivered” unto the Roman brethren (Rom. 6:17). It is also known as “the faith which was **once for all** delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3, ASV).

Reason #4: Too Much Catholic Teaching Contradicts New Testament Teaching

It is interesting that the Catholic church claims to believe in the Bible as the Word of God, especially when you consider how much of Catholic teaching is either completely foreign to Scripture or just in boldface contradiction to Scripture.

The Bible records plainly that our Lord taught that we should “call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9). Yet the Catholic church calls their “clergy” “Father.”

The Catholic church does not allow their priests to marry. Paul called this teaching a “doctrine of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3). In fact, it would be beneficial to notice the whole passage:

But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

One needs to consider also the Catholic command to abstain from meats, as opposed to the words of the Apostle Paul in the preceding passage.

Neither time nor space will allow us to do much more than mention other teachings and practices of the Catholic church which blatantly contradict what Scripture teaches.

Their views and teaching concerning Mary, purgatory, indulgences, sainthood, and a multiplicity of other examples which contradict the plain teaching of God's inspired Word, the Holy Scriptures, all stand as more than enough reasons to accept Scripture above the traditions of the Catholic church. Even then, we have not even mentioned the pope and Bible passages which contradict his very right to exist. When you consider 2 Thessalonians 2, which very well could be explicitly referencing the pope and Romanism, or, at the very least, applies in principle, you have an insurmountable mountain of evidence concerning not only why it is foolish to follow Catholicism, but also why it stands as a blatant attack against all that is holy and Divine.

Conclusion

In bringing this chapter to a close, we note that evidence of this nature could be multiplied, both from Scripture and from history, pointing to the Catholic church as a great fraud which has been perpetrated upon the minds of men and women through the centuries even up until this very moment.

Though we do want to be kind to those who have been deceived, we do not feel the necessity to be anything but forthright concerning the fallacious claims made by the Catholic church. There is no Scriptural backing for the practices of the Catholic church, nor is there, for that matter, any Scriptural backing for the existence of this man-made church. It is our prayer that men will consider the evidence and turn their attention to the inspired Word of God as they seek to please our God and Father and our Savior Jesus Christ. May we all study our Bibles more and more and apply the Divine truths therein to our lives, as we ever strive to walk nearer to our God each day.

Endnotes

1 **McClintock & Strong's Cyclopedia**, (Rio, WI: Ages Software, 2000), p. 227.

2 Taken from the following website: http://www.catholic.com/library/Scripture_and_Tradition.asp.

3 Of course we realize that the Lord's church which we read of in the Bible is neither Jewish, Catholic, nor Protestant.

4 Eldred Stevens & Eric Beevers, **Stevens-Beevers Debate: The New Testament And Roman Catholicism** (Fort Worth, TX: Star Publications, 1953), p. 32.

5 Mr. Beevers used the phrase "all forms of Protestantism," and would include the church of Christ in that general statement. We recognize that the church of Christ is neither Jewish, Catholic nor Protestant.

6 Taken from the following website: <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1996/9611frs.asp>.

7 N. L. Geisler & R. E. MacKenzie, **Roman Catholics And Evangelicals: Agreements And Differences** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Taken from the Christian Courier Website at: <http://www.christiancourier.com/feature/september2002.htm>.

11 Taken from the following website: http://www.catholic.com/library/Scripture_and_Tradition.asp.

12 Taken from the following website: <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1996/9611frs.asp>.

13 Stevens & Beevers, p. 32.

14 Taken from the Christian Courier Website at: <http://www.christiancourier.com/feature/september2002.htm>.

15 Taken from the following website: http://www.catholic.com/library/Scripture_and_Tradition.asp.

CHAPTER 18

Over The Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society

Stacey Grant

Introduction

EVERY SINCERE FOLLOWER OF Christ lives according to the firmly stated command: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).¹ Beneficially, the term “study” is translated “endeavoring” elsewhere in Holy Writ (Eph. 4:3). As most students of the Bible know, this phrase carries the thought of one’s giving his absolute best to a given task. Too, every Gospel preacher and teacher should commit to memory and to life the sobering charge: “Take heed unto thyself, and the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16).

Honest adherents of Christianity would readily acknowledge that some Bible doctrines are indeed difficult and require much study:

Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these in which some things are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Properly arriving at truth requires one's acknowledging and utilizing the principle that there are **no** contradictions in the Bible. When one verse **appears** to contradict another verse, the student is required to (1) begin at the verse that possesses the greater clarity and (2) interpret the more difficult passage in view of the known or clearer passage. An excellent example for employing this principle is the conversation between Christ and the young, rich ruler (Luke 18:18-19). One who is **not** familiar with the nature of Christ as stated in John 1:1-3, John 1:14, and Hebrews 1:1-8—which indisputably reveal Him as being 100% God—may be inclined to accept His statement as proof of His **not** being Deity. Correctly employing the principles of ascertaining the Truth will remove any semblance of doubt from the mind of the sincere pupil about Christ's nature. **Fact:** Jesus was also 100% human, accepting the subordinate role of a servant in order to complete the Scheme of Redemption (Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:5-11).

When this author was a babe in Christ, he was taught that it was a sin for a Christian to marry an unbeliever; 2 Corinthians 6:14 **seemed** to teach this thought. The chief proponent of the doctrine also taught the author the Gospel—leaving very little doubt in the author's mind concerning the apparent truthfulness of the view. Sadly, completely unaware of the contextual setting and other, clearer verses pertaining to the issue, the author began fervently teaching what he ascertained as the truth on the subject. As the reader can imagine, the author ran into some very stiff opposition. Ironically, there were cases in the congregation where Christians had married unbelievers; however, the leadership never publicly addressed the cases of **apparent** sin. Reasoning through the situation left the author somewhat perplexed. He then asked the preacher if such cases were not a direct violation of Scripture which required discipline—to which the preacher answered with silence. It was not until the author

was taught properly the contextual setting of 2 Corinthians 6:14 that he was able to arrive at the truth about this gravely serious issue.

Being unknowingly ignorant of the totality of the verses relating to the above doctrine led the author down the wrong path. Had he not been taught correctly and consented to the truth relative to the said doctrine, the destiny of the author's soul may have been in jeopardy. Shamefully, no religious group better illustrates **willful** ignorance and/or negligence of the Holy Book than do the Jehovah's Witnesses. This organization's dishonorable distaste for Jesus and a profusion of Christianity's easily ascertainable truths is vividly portrayed throughout so many of its teachings. With great appreciation and love in his heart for the truth and the great Southaven church of Christ, this author will do his best to aid his brethren to defend better the Gospel against the **Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society**, the publishing company of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. (The author will, from this point forward, refer to the group under discussion as the JWs.)

Reasoning Through The Scriptures According To The JWs

One of the chief weapons of the JWs is a book entitled **Reasoning From The Scriptures**, published by the Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society. The purpose of the book is as follows:

The apostle Paul made it a practice to "reason from the Scriptures, explaining and proving by references" what he taught. (Acts 17:2-3) The material contained in this book can help you to do the same.²

In a section entitled, "**How do the Jehovah's Witnesses arrive at their explanation of the Bible?**," these words are penned:

A key factor is that the Witnesses really believe that the Bible is God's Word and that what it contains is there for our instruction. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) So they do not resort to philosophical arguments to evade its clear statements of the truth or to justify the way of people who have abandoned its moral standards.³

These affirmations will be scrutinized in this lesson.

The JW's Reasoning Concerning The Restoration Principle

One should expect this response when asking a JW the question, "**Are Jehovah's Witnesses an American religion?**":

They are advocates of God's kingdom, not of the political, economic, or social system of any nation of this old world. It is true that the Jehovah's Witnesses had their modern-day start in the United States. The location of their world-headquarters there helped to make it possible to print and ship Bible literature to most parts of the world.⁴

In a paragraph entitled, "**How old is the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses?**," this response is rendered:

The modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses began with the forming of a group for Bible study in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., in the early 1870's. At first they were known only as the Bible students, but in 1931 they **adopted** the Scriptural name of Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isa. 43:10-12) Their beliefs and practices are not new but are a **restoration** of first-century Christianity (emp. mine throughout, SG).⁵

Notice how the JW's **adopted** the name they wear—a name that is neither new in nature, nor is it authorized. Restoration of New Testament Christianity consists of one's

wearing the **new name** exclusively, which **Jehovah** provided (Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). James 2:7 is an allusion to the name Christian. In the Bible, the Jews were **never** known as or referred to as JWs. This organization openly admits to violating Colossians 3:17 and 1 Peter 4:11 when selecting its name.

Furthermore, the **original** setting in which the verse is found was ignored. According to the context, the Lord is right in the middle of **rebuking**, not commending, Israel for her unfaithfulness. He is denouncing what they were embracing—idolatry. Isaiah 42-44 deals with the folly of idol worship. The Lord is challenging the other, so-called gods to provide proof of their being the Creator, Almighty, infinite in wisdom, and eternal in nature. In fact, the term the JWs so passionately embrace was **not** used in a positive fashion in its appropriate setting.

In addition, the Restoration Principle does **not** allow for an earthly headquarters for the church, an obvious sign of a man-made institution, which the JWs admit to having (Eph. 1:22-23). Strictly adhering to New Testament Christianity likewise means one will honor Matthew 16:18, Acts 20:28, and Romans 16:16 concerning the Lord's church. Where in Holy Writ is the church ever referred to as a "Kingdom Hall?" Do the JWs speak where the Bible speaks, and are they silent where the Bible is silent? Their version of restoration is foreign to Romans 6:17-18.

The JWs' Reasoning Concerning The Government

When it concerns the affairs of the government, "neutrality" is the position this organization professes. JWs cite Romans 13:1 and Romans 13:7-8 as "proof" that they honor the government as God commands, when just the opposite is true. For example, they enjoy the benefits of living in a free society that is protected by the greatest

military on earth, yet they refuse to serve their country through the armed forces. They misuse words spoken by the Christ as corroborating evidence against Christians being active in the government, even by voting (John 6:15; John 18:36). According to their doctrine, one who votes, recites the Pledge of Allegiance, or displays patriotism is violating James 4:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:14; he is a “friend” of the world and an idolater.⁶ In reality, their position is analogous to the “all-life-is-worship” false doctrine some brethren now espouse. Truly, one can show his patriotism without worshipping anything or anyone:

Read carefully their “proof” from secular history:

A careful review of history of all the information available goes to show that, until the time of Marcus Aurelius [Roman emperor from 161 to 180 C.E.], no Christian became a soldier; and no soldier, after becoming a Christian, remained in military service.⁷

Does **sacred** history agree with the JW's? John the Baptist did not tell the tax collectors and soldiers—both of whom worked for the government of his day—that repentance required their leaving or resigning their positions (Luke 3:8; Luke 3:12-14). Jesus did not condemn the centurion who displayed great faith for being in the Roman army (Matt. 8:5-13). Did not the Christ extol him for his great faith? Furthermore, Cornelius became a Christian without resigning from the Roman army (Acts 10). [The JW's' New World Translation (NWT) refers to Cornelius as an “army officer.”] The Holy Spirit referred to this centurion/soldier as a “devout man” and “one that feared God.” Why use such words of commendation, if the man were guilty of violating a known law of God? **If he were living today, Cornelius could not become a JW and remain in the army.**

Neutrality would also mean that Christians could not work for the human government. The Philippian jailer

worked for the Department of Corrections (Acts 16). This branch of government is responsible for executing capital punishment when necessary (Rom. 13:4). Erastus was acknowledged as a city government employee (Rom. 16:23). Could not the saints of Caesar's household have been soldiers (Phil. 4:22)? Were Paul and Silas "neutral" when they utilized the judicial branch of government as citizens of the Roman Empire (Acts 16; Acts 24-26)? Is not this brief information sufficient to defeat the Jews' false view about the saint and the government?

The Jews' Reasoning Concerning The Holy Spirit

Is the Holy Spirit an "it" or a person? The Jews adamantly aver:

A comparison of the Bible texts that refer to the holy spirit shows that it is spoken of as "filling" people; they can be "baptized" with it; and be "anointed" with it. (Luke 1:41; Matt. 3:11; Acts 10:38) None of these expressions would be appropriate if the holy spirit were a person. Jesus also referred to the holy spirit as a "helper" (Greek, *parakletos*), and he said that this helper would "teach," "bear witness," "speak," and "hear." (John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13) It is not unusual in the Scriptures for something to be personified. For example, wisdom is said to have "children." (Luke 7:35) Sin and death are spoken of as being kings. (Rom. 5:14; Rom. 5:21) While some texts say that the spirit "spoke," other passages make clear that this was done through angels or humans. (Acts 4:24-25; Acts 28:25; Matt. 10:19-20; compare Acts 20:23 with Acts 21:10-11.)... **The correct identification of the holy spirit must fit all the scriptures that refer to that spirit.** With this viewpoint, it is **logical** to conclude that the holy spirit is the **active force** of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will.—Psm. 104:30; 2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 4:31.⁸

In their view, the third member of the Godhead is simply an “it.” References to His being a person found in the Holy Bible should be viewed as a mere case of “personification” of an inanimate object, which does not possess life.

The JW’s Reasoning Is Irrational

Had the JW’s respect for the Scriptures, they would not fall under the condemnation of 2 Peter 3:16. The Bible informs us **how** the Spirit operates: “And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Using the JW’s “logic,” could not one argue from Ephesians 3:17 for a personal, literal indwelling of the Christ? This author believes that the Holy Spirit indwells the saint representatively through His medium—the Word. Likewise, faithful brethren have long taught that the Spirit and the Word are inseparable, because such a position is undoubtedly correct. The Scriptures reveal that both can convict (John 16:7-8; Heb. 4:11-12), comfort (John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Thess. 4:18), sanctify (John 17:17; 2 Thess. 2:13), save (Rom. 1:16; Tit. 3:5), indwell (Rom. 8:11; Col. 3:16), and give life to the saint and sinner accordingly (2 Cor. 3:6). The saved are born of the Spirit and the Word (John 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). The Spirit’s tool for accomplishing His duties is the Gospel—plain and simple.

The Eternal Evidence Is Indisputable

When God is introduced to us in the Scriptures, the Hebrew term *elohim*, **which is plural in nature**, is first used. The same term is listed 64 times in Genesis 1-5. *Jehovah* (LORD, KJV) is introduced later, revealing the eternal nature of God, and is also used interchangeably with the name *elohim* (Gen. 2:3-4; Gen. 11:7-8). Well, this indubitably explains the obvious—there is more than one personality in the eternal being known as God:

And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26).

Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech (Gen. 11:7).

Note: Even the NWT fails to support the JW's doctrinal position by translating both verses correctly.

The Prevailing Proof Is Incontestable

Ironically, the above quote is designed to disprove the Holy Spirit as God; on the contrary, it actually provides strong evidence in favor of His being Deity. Now, attach the above quote with the JW's own meanings, and see the truth unfold:

Definition: The Hebrew word *ru'ach* and the Greek *pneu'ma*, which are often translated "spirit," have a number of meanings. All of them refer to that which is invisible to human sight and which give evidence of force in motion. The Hebrew and Greek words are used with reference to (1) wind, (2) the active life-force in earthly creatures, (3) the impelling force that issues from a person's figurative heart and causes him to say and do things a certain way, (4) inspired utterances originating with an invisible source, (5) **spirit persons**, and (6) God's active force, or holy spirit.⁹

Are not angels **spiritual persons** possessing attributes similar to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 1:14), as the above statement confirms? The Father is also a **spiritual person** Who possesses the same attributes as the Spirit (John 4:24). Consistency demands that the JW's exercise the same logic concerning the Father, Spirit, and angels relative to this issue.

Even the NWT's rendering of Matthew 28:19 supports the Biblical Truth concerning the Holy Spirit's being a person—a member of the Godhead: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit." How can an "it" possess any authority? **Questions one should ask the JW's:** (1) Why did God include an "inanimate object" on equal authoritative footing as Himself? (2) If God is not the author of confusion, (1 Cor. 14:33), did He make a **mistake** regarding the Holy Spirit in this verse? (3) Why would God send forth a seemingly confusing and contradictory message from Matthew 28:19 concerning the Holy Spirit?

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 not only teaches plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, but it also gives more insight about the Holy Spirit's capabilities. **He**—the Holy Spirit—can read and search the Father's mind and thoughts (1 Cor. 2:10). In like manner, **He** can read the thoughts of man and intercede on his behalf (Rom. 8:26-27). Yes, **He** is capable of communicating because **He** is a person.

The Father reads the **mind** or Biblical heart of the Spirit (Rom. 8:27). The NWT attempts to use stealthy operations pertaining to this critical piece of evidence by stating, "Yet he knows what the **meaning** of the spirit is." Again, even the ungodly "translating" of the NWT cannot steal away the obvious, inarguable truth about the Spirit's nature.

The Christ's Confession Is Incontrovertible

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). "Another" (*allon*) literally means "another of the same kind," the same term used in Galatians 1:7, which proves unequivocally that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are identical in nature. Equally, the Holy Spirit and Christ

possess the same capabilities: both are intercessors (Rom. 8:26; Rom. 8:34). Incidentally, “Comforter” (*Paraclete*) (John 14:16; John 14:26) is also translated “Advocate” (1 John 2:1). This proof crushes the JW’s egregious error completely.

A text commonly used by the faithful concerning the Holy Spirit’s Deity is Acts 5:1-4. The NWT “translates” the term “lie” as “play false.” Who speaks in such a fashion? Could it be that the translators “accidentally” forgot that they translated this term as “lying” in all other places it is found in the New Testament? Were they trying to avoid the obvious import of the passage by using confusing or misleading terminology? Still, the NWT teaches from this passage the truth about the Spirit’s nature.

Based upon the JW’s doctrine, the Holy Spirit must be created—the so-called active force God uses to accomplish His will. In contrast, the New Testament identifies Him as the **eternal** Spirit (Heb. 9:14); such an adjective is absolutely accurate. Too, the same adjective is used to describe the Father as “everlasting” (Rom. 16:26). Oops, the NWT again fails in protecting the JW’s doctrine by referring to the Spirit as “everlasting” in nature, having neither a beginning nor an end (Heb. 9:14).

The Concise Conclusion Is Irrefutable

Wisdom personified is limited; however, the Spirit possesses **every** attribute a person possesses. He has a mind (Rom. 8:26), is a lawgiver (Rom. 8:2), can reveal intelligible information (1 Cor. 2:10), can speak on behalf of another (John 15:26), can produce life (John 6:63), can comfort (John 14:26), can teach (John 14:26), can **search the thoughts of God** (1 Cor. 2:10), can know the thoughts of others (1 Cor. 2:11), can express emotions (Eph. 4:30), can fellowship (Phil. 2:1), and can sanctify (2 Thess. 2:13). Consistency, thou art a jewel!

The JW's Reasoning Concerning The Christ

Not only do the JW's blasphemously disrespect the third member of the Godhead, they apply the same venomous attacks to the Son as well.

The Doctrine Is Explained

The name of this Michael appears only five times in the Bible. The glorious spirit person who bears the name is referred to as "one of the chief princes," "the great prince who has charge of your [Daniel's] people," and as "the archangel." (Dan. 10:13; Dan. 12:1; Jude 9, RS) Michael means, "Who is like God?" The name evidently designates Michael as the one who takes the lead in upholding Jehovah's sovereignty and destroying God's enemies. At 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the command of Jesus Christ for the resurrection to begin is described as "the archangel's call," and Jude 9 says that the archangel is Michael. Would it be appropriate to liken Jesus' commanding call to that of someone lesser in authority? Reasonably, then, the archangel Michael is Jesus Christ... So the evidence indicates that the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God.¹⁰

The JW's fatally flawed reasoning is as follows: (1) Jesus was never God, but an angel, a glorious spirit-person. (2) He was apparently later elevated to the status of archangel. (3) He was known as Michael before He came to earth. (4) He was then promoted to the status of Son of God. (5) He reassumed the name Michael upon His return to heaven. And, (6) He is no longer a mere glorious spiritual being, but the glorified spirit Son of God.

The Doctrine Is Logically Examined

One who has knowledge of the Son's nature would be inclined to seek answers to the following questions. (1)

Did Jesus cease being an angel when He became the Son of God, and then regain His true identity upon His return to Heaven? (2) Would not the Lord violate His own prohibition concerning angel worship, if Jesus were an angel (Heb. 1:5-8; Rev. 19:10; Rev. 22:9)? (3) Michael, being an angel, is included in Hebrews 1:5-8, correct? (4) Jesus could not be both an angel and God simultaneously without the Father's violating His law of **prohibitive silence of the Scriptures**, right? (5) Would not God also be guilty of violating what He reveals as the angels' purpose, were Jesus ever an angel (Heb. 1:13-14)? (6) Does not the Father credit Jesus with the laying of the foundations of the earth and heavens (Heb. 1:10-12)? "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, **even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God**" (Psm. 90:2). So what is one to infer concerning the nature of Christ from the affirmations of the Father, Holy Spirit, and inspired Psalmist?

Note: 1 John 3:1-2 **appears** to support the JW's position, but must be understood in light of other known verses. Our resurrected bodies will be "like" or "similar," not identical, in nature to Christ's body, capable of inhabiting heaven, incapable of decay (1 Cor. 15). Does not the Bible identify man as being made a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7-8)? Matthew 22:30 more precisely identifies what will be the saint's resurrected body.

The Doctrine's Inaccuracies Are Exposed

The same book that describes Jesus as being less than Deity actually acknowledges Him as being Divine:

Isaiah 9:6 (RS) also prophetically describes Jesus as "Mighty God" but not as the Almighty God. All of this is in harmony with Jesus' being described as "a god," or "**divine**" at John 1:1 (NWT, AT).¹¹ ["AT" is a reference to **The Bible—An American**

Translation,¹² which the JW's acknowledge and support as correctly rendering the term "divine" in reference to Jesus.]

The term "divine" is found three times in the King James Version of the Bible (Heb. 9:1; 2 Pet. 1:3-4) and always is used in reference to Deity. Contrary to JW doctrine, even the NWT agrees with the Truth by acknowledging Christ as possessing "divine power" (2 Pet. 1:2-3); this same Greek term is translated "Godhead" in reference to the Father (Acts 17:29, in the ASV as well) and "Divine Being" in the NWT. **Also, God is referred to as "Jehovah," "the Holy One of Israel," and "the Mighty God" interchangeably** (Isa. 10:20-21).

Consistency demands that the JW's apply the same standard to the Father as they do to the Son in this matter. According to the JW's' reasoning, the Father is lowered to a "lesser god," since He is referred to as "the Mighty God" as well.

Genesis 1:1, John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:10, taken together, deal a deadly blow to the JW's' anti-God position concerning the Christ:

In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth...**All** things came into existence through him, and apart from him, not even **one** thing came into existence...And You at [the] beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands (NWT).

Illogically and confusingly, the JW's would have us to believe that the terms "all" and "one" do not mean what they really mean (i.e., they are probably hyperbolic in nature). Why would God employ terms that are "misleading"? Are not these verses, then, in stark contradiction to John 8:31-32, if they do not truly represent what is apparently affirmed?

Powerful Points To Ponder

(1) The Father and Holy Spirit identify Christ as the Creator (Heb. 1:2; Heb. 1:10). (2) The Holy Spirit identifies the Father as Creator (Acts 17:24). (3) The verb “made” in the aforementioned verses is the same word in the original language. (4) The Father and Jesus Christ possess and wield identical creative power. Therefore, (5) Christ must be Divine—equal to the Father.

Power Points To Utilize

One night in a Bible class, this author revealed to the class an argument guaranteed to knock out the JW’s anti-God view of the Christ. He saw in Isaiah 43:10—the very verse from which the so-called JW’s obtained their name, dishonoring the Savior and disregarding prophecy in the process—affirmations from Jehovah that negated all “Jesus is a ‘god’” claims of the JW’s. Up to that point, this author had never read another brother’s arguments stemming from this passage. The affirmations are as follows. (1) There were no gods **created before** Jehovah. (2) There were no gods **created after** Him or **by** Him. (3) Jehovah has fervently denied the existence of any type of God outside Himself (Isa. 44:6). Conclusion: (4) If Jesus is a created “god,” who created Him?

The very next day an adherent of the “Jesus is a created god” doctrine of demons knocked on the door of one of the members’ homes. The faithful member had committed to memory the argument from the night before and presented it effectively, to which the JW responded, “I never had any one to ask me that question before. I will be back next week with an answer for you.” The JW also admitted to being in the organization for nearly 30 years at that time. Of course, he did not have an answer readily available because **Reasoning From The Scriptures** did not contain one. Since JW’s must follow the script given them by the Watch Tower Society, he had to scurry back to the “Kingdom Hall” for regrouping.

As promised, the JW did return next week; however, he **did not** have an answer for the argument so powerfully, and, of course, accurately presented by the faithful saint. His parting response was, “Oh well, you believe in the Trinity any way.” This was the “best” he could do as he walked away wounded—still clinging to the deceitful, devilish doctrine which attacks the nature of Christ.

The Doctrine Is Further Scrutinized

Now, let us concentrate on Daniel 10:13 for a moment. Is not Michael referred to as **one of** the chief princes, and **not** the **only** one? He, then, is **not** the only one of his kind. Daniel 12:1 follows the lead of Daniel 10:13 by referring to Michael as a prince; this the reader now knows because of the information previously provided. Ironically, the above quotation or statement argues from the standpoint of the meaning of Michael’s name. Inharmoniously, the same argument is denied as being incredible when the evidence points toward proving Christ as Deity. In a paragraph entitled, “Does Matthew 1:23 indicate that Jesus when on earth was God?,” the response is:

Matt. 1:23: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanu’u-el’ (which means, God with us [“God is with us,” NE])...It was not unusual for Hebrew names to include within them the word for God or even an abbreviated form of God’s personal name. For example, Eli’athah means “God Has Come.”; Jehu means “Jehovah Is He”; Elijah means “My God Is Jehovah.” But none of these names implied that the possessor was himself God.¹³

The Old Testament Presents Christ As Deity

Truth consistently reveals answers to evidently false doctrines. (1) True, **God** named both Michael and Jesus. (2) Elijah, Samuel, Daniel, and others were given their

names by their parents in honor of God. (3) Jesus was given His name by His Father, revealing His character and mission (Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:31-32; Matt. 1:23). (4) Likewise, Adam's name, which means "ground" or "earth man," has reference to part of his person or nature. (5) Immanuel unmistakably describes Jesus' nature—He is wholly God. (6) God will never share His glory with another (Isa. 42:8), but He and Jesus shared the **same** glory before the world was created (John 17:5). Even the NWT acknowledges that it was Jehovah's and Jesus' indistinguishable glory that Isaiah saw (Isa. 6:1; John 12:41).

The New Testament Presents Christ As Deity

"Robbery" (Phil. 2:6) can mean, "to seize by force, to plunder, to catch away, pluck, take by force." Simply, Christ's claim to be equal with God does not steal away any glory from the Father (Phil. 2:5-7). The NWT helps us better understand Hebrews 1:3 by translating "express image" as "exact representation," and Colossians 2:9 by rendering the verse, "Because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." Yes, the Son is the exact representation of the original, the Father, as of a die perfectly representing the original design. The laws of science inform us that if Christ is "*monogenes*," or the "only begotten" (John 1:14), He must be of the same kind and or **nature** as the One Who fathered Him. He is no more "god-like" than a baby is "human-like." Jesus **became** the Son of God, restricting His glory when He **became** a man.

The JW's Reasoning Concerning The Nature Of Man And Angels

Man As Viewed By The JW's Doctrine

Gen. 2:7: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow

into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul.” (Notice that this does not say that man was given a soul but that he **became** a soul, a living person.)¹⁴

Eccl. 12:7: “Then the dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit [or, life-force; Hebrew, *ru’ach*] itself returns to the true God who gave it.” (Notice that the Hebrew word for spirit is *ru’ach*; but the word translated soul is *ne’phesh*. The text does not mean that at death the spirit travels all the way to the personal presence of God; rather, any prospect for the person to live again rests with God.)¹⁵

The NWT Contradicts The JW’s Doctrine Concerning Angels

The nature of angels is most beneficial to this study for several reasons. First, the JW’s teach that angels are spiritual persons (Heb. 1:14; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7-12, NWT). Second, the Holy Spirit reveals that angels can take on human flesh and become men: Genesis 19:1 and Genesis 19:15 vividly reveal two **angels** going into and leaving Sodom. Third, Lot acknowledges these **angels** as possessing human physical features—men (Gen. 19:2; Gen. 19:8). Fourth, they actually ate dinner with Lot (Gen. 19:3). Fifth, even the wicked men of Sodom acknowledged the angels as men (Gen. 19:4-5). Sixth, the Holy Spirit now refers to the angels as men (Gen. 19:10; Gen. 19:12).

Conclusion: The angels had taken on human flesh, but had not relinquished their spiritual bodies.

The NWT Contradicts The JW’s Doctrine Concerning Man

Again, (1) did the angels cease being angels when they took on human flesh? (2) Were not the angels’ (spiritual persons’) spiritual bodies simply surrounded by fleshly ones? (3) Did not the Holy Spirit, with the Father in full agreement, use the terms “angels” and “men” interchangeably? (4) The

angels did not give up their nature when they took on human flesh. Likewise, (5) Christ did not give up His person when He took on human flesh (Phil. 2:7). He voluntarily submitted to becoming a human being; the word *kenosis* is the Greek word for “emptying,” and is related to the verb translated here as “made himself of no reputation,” which literally means “He emptied Himself.” Christ emptied Himself by **veiling** or restricting His glory, becoming a human being, and submitting completely to the Father’s will—never giving up His nature in the process.

The Holy Spirit makes a distinction between the outward and inward man: “But though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Man is said to be clothed **in** a tabernacle or earthly house—which he is capable of putting off (2 Cor. 5:1-7; 2 Pet. 1:13-14). The import of the verses is as follows: (1) There is a part of man that is different from the tabernacle; (2) The tabernacle can and will be replaced, yet the person will remain the same; (3) The person is **not** the tabernacle, but is merely clothed in the tabernacle.

The NWT Contradicts The JW’s Doctrine Concerning The Soul At Death

After acknowledging that words in the Bible can carry multiple meanings based upon the context, the JW’s resort back to their “I will pick and choose the meaning that best suits my taste” method of interpreting the Holy Scriptures when it comes to the varied meanings of the word “soul.” **Major attack:** Christ is accused of **borrowing** the doctrine of the soul’s immortality from mystery cults and philosophers:

The Christian concept of a spiritual soul created by God and infused into the body at conception to make man a living whole is the fruit of a long

development in Christian philosophy. Only with Origen [died c. 254 C.E.] in the East and St. Augustine [died 430 C.E.] in the West was the soul established as a spiritual substance and a philosophical concept formed of its nature...His [Augustine's] doctrine...owed much (including shortcomings) to Neoplatonism.¹⁶

The concept of immortality is a product of Greek thinking, whereas the hope of a resurrection belongs to Jewish thought...Following Alexander's conquests Judaism gradually absorbed Greek concepts.¹⁷

Immortality of the soul is a Greek notion formed in ancient mystery cults and elaborated by the philosopher Plato.¹⁸

The Watch Tower Society, like all teachers of error, made a major blunder when translating Luke 16:19-31:

Now in course of time the beggar **died** and **he was carried** off by the angels to the bosom [position] of Abraham. Also, the rich man **died** and was buried. And in Hades **he lifted** up his eyes, **he existing** in torments, and **he saw** Abraham afar off and Lazarus in the bosom [position] with him. So **he called** and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because **I am in anguish** in this blazing fire" (Luke 16:22-24, NWT).

Do not the above verses teach correctly what the Bible reveals about death? Three souls are pictured as existing after physical death. All three are in Hades, which is pictured as a place containing two compartments. The souls are able to talk, feel, see, etc.

These evident facts pose the "horns of a dilemma" for the JWs. (1) Jesus always used factual references to teach His lessons. Why would He now abandon such a format to teach a fictitious story? (2) If He knew that man did not possess a soul that can live apart from his physical

body, why would Jesus teach the very opposite? (3) Would not such an inconsistency make the Holy Bible unreliable? (4) Would not such an inconsistency indict Jesus as a false prophet? Jesus affirmed:

If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste [spiritual] death (John 8:51).

I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but **of the living** (Matt. 22:32).

Jesus reveals that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living—awaiting the resurrection.

Is not the verse right on the mark when it avers, “For the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas. 2:26). The verse **does not** say, “The spirit without the body is dead.” It teaches, adamantly and very forcefully, that faith, separate from good works, is dead. Yes, the NWT, too, plainly teaches the true meaning of spiritual death (Gen. 2:16-17; Gen. 3:1-6; Gen. 3:23). It emphatically states, concerning eating from the tree of good and evil, “For in the day you eat from it you will positively die” (Gen. 2:17). The NWT does **not** state, “After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they both positively ‘ceased existing.’” Again, accuracy is noted concerning the prodigal son (Luke 15:24; Luke 15:32). As well, the same is said of the Ephesians’ spiritual state (Eph. 2:1). Death, according to their so-called Bible, means **separation**, not cessation. Spiritual death is symbolic of physical death in that it causes one to be separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2).

Conclusion

The JW’s claim of **restoring** New Testament Christianity is nothing short of utter blasphemy. They do more to dishonor the Christ than any other group claiming allegiance to Him. When confronted with their indecent proposals, the saint must cling to John 8:31-32.

Endnotes

1 All quotations will be from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 **Reasoning From The Scriptures** (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), p. 7.

3 Ibid, p. 204.

4 Ibid, p. 201.

5 Ibid, p. 203.

6 Ibid, pp. 274-75.

7 Ibid, p. 272, quoting E. W. Barnes, **The Rise Of Christianity** (London: 1947), p. 333.

8 Ibid, pp. 380-81.

9 Ibid, p. 380.

10 Ibid, p. 218.

11 Ibid, p. 213.

12 Ibid, p. 6.

13 Ibid, p. 214.

14 Ibid, p. 375.

15 Ibid, p. 378.

16 Ibid, p. 379, quoting **New Catholic Encyclopedia**, Volume 13, pp. 452-54.

17 Ibid, quoting Alexander Westpal, ed., **Dictionnaire Encyclopedidique De La Bible**, Volume 2 (Valence, France: 1935), p. 557.

18 Ibid, quoting **Presbyterian Life** (May 1, 1970), p. 35.

CHAPTER 19

Over The Books Of Mormonism

Scott Lambert

Introduction

IT WAS *ASTUTELY STATED* by the wise man that of the making of books there is no end (Eccl. 12:12). Indeed, the making of books has been of immense value in educating humanity in the fields of science and technology. However, this ubiquitous reality has not come without a cost. Consider the plethora of religious books in the world. Humanity has always had the propensity to concoct new and evolving gods with their own styles of fabricated worship (Judg. 17:1-13).

With a cursory glance at the world religions of the past 250 years, it becomes clear that Mormonism is by far the most successful movement among the masses—one that can no longer be ignored. It has achieved a lofty level of social acceptability, and, as a direct result, its members have significant influence in the realms of politics and corporate business disproportionate to their numbers. Due to the successful conversions of several business tycoons that have now accepted their “church calling,” the Latter Day Saints (LDS) church has shrewdly erected an impressive financial empire to support its religious directives.

When one takes a step back to mull over what our LDS friends have accomplished, one has to be impressed

with the success they have achieved. There are really two central components that underpin this successful enterprise: the LDS church's growth from 6 members at its founding in 1830 to over 11 million today, and the massive missionary force it fields around the world make Mormonism continually visible to the outside world. What makes this more impressive is that they have done so from a relatively conservative moral perspective. In other words, they have not sold out their moral convictions for the sake of growing. A word to the wise is sufficient!

The Necessity Of Critical Thinking

The God of heaven is a God of intelligence. This is evident by the complexity of the created order around us (Rom. 1:20). The Bible also affirms that we are created in His image (Gen. 1:26). Indeed, humans are distinctly different from all created life forms in that we have a capacity to think at an advanced level. The neocortex of the human brain comprises about 85% of the brain's mass. This is the area of the brain where thinking and problem-solving come from. Scientists purport that the neocortex of a human is extremely advanced and superior to that of the most intelligent mammals on the earth.

This is significant to note because Christianity is a religion of the mind (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23). Mormonism, like many other sects of "Christendom," is viewed from a very subjective level. If you were to sit down at the table to hear the typical Mormon spiel, you would hear this, "Pray for the Holy Spirit to tell you whether this book [**Book Of Mormon**] is from God." As we will see in a moment, this is no test at all. I've told my friends that God has never told me that the book is from God and the response is, "Keep praying!"

Since it is the case that God created humanity with the aptitude to think in a cogent fashion, it is then logical

to assume that He has communicated with His intelligent creatures. Indeed, that is precisely what the Divine record says:

God who in various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

The Father has revealed Himself to humanity abstractly through the created order (Psm. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). However, one could never learn the will of God from a mere survey of nature. Therefore, concrete revelation is required to make His will known to His children.

Everyone in the religious world is familiar with the statement of the apostle Paul where he said:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Greek word for “inspiration” is *theopneustos*, which literally means “God breathed.” Think about the implications of that word. The Bible does not claim to be a book written by mere men followed by a stamp of approval by God. What this word implies is that, when men wrote the Scriptures, what they were writing was that which God had breathed—the Scriptures are the result of God’s out-breathing, even though penned by human beings. That is a powerful claim to make.

Again, notice the context in Peter’s second epistle:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

What Peter is asserting in this context is that no one who wrote by inspiration was giving his own private commentary on what God was wanting him to reveal. Moreover, the inspired penmen were moved (*phero*) by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the men who wrote the Bible were writing God's words, just as assuredly as if God had picked them up and placed them where He wanted. It will be interesting to notice the stark contrast with the Mormon "books of inspiration" later on in this discourse.

The Bible affirms to be the complete revelation of God, as already observed in our study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. James would call it "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). And Jude would affirm that it had been "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), which means that it is perpetually valid. Moreover, since it is perpetually valid and perfect, what more do we need?

Consider what Jesus said to the apostles before His date with Calvary, when He affirmed to these men that the Holy Spirit would come and deliver to them "all truth" (John 16:13). Long before Joseph Smith ever received his "revelation," Paul declared God's truth to be "God's power unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) that would be an everlasting covenant for earth's citizenry (Heb. 13:20).

Now it is important to note that, when your Mormon friends come knocking on your door, they are going to do their best to make you think they are firm Bible believers. However, when Bible doctrine conflicts with Mormon teachings, they immediately discard what the Bible says because it has been "corrupted." As a matter of fact, Bruce McConkie says:

These writings in their original form were perfect scripture; they were the mind and will of the Lord, his voice to his chosen people and all who would hear it (D. & C. 68:4). That they have come down to us in their perfect form is well known to us in the Church and by all

reputable scholars. Only a few fanatics among the sects of Christendom close their eyes to reality and profess to believe in what they call verbal revelation, that is, that every word and every syllable in some version or another of the Bible is the exact word spoken by Deity.¹

Again, referring to the fact that the Bible was once accurate but now corrupted, the book of 1 Nephi claims:

Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles...And after they go forth...thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church [the Roman Catholic Church], which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away...that they may pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men...because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book [the Bible]...an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them (1 Nephi 13:25-27, 29).

Mormon theologian James E. Talmage wrote in **Articles Of Faith**:

There will be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation of these or other scriptures unless it is effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost...Let the Bible then be read reverently and with prayerful care, the reader ever seeking the light of the Spirit that he may discern between truth and errors of men.²

Many more quotes could be given here by Mormon leaders; however, I think these three quotes will suffice for now.

Proponents of this position are not only attacking God's Word but are attacking the very character of God

Himself. The Bible describes Deity as being both omniscient (Acts 1:24) and omnipotent (Rev. 19:6). Yet Mormonism takes these attributes away from Deity in what they espouse. “How so?” you may ask.

In the first place, the Bible purports to be a book that will stand the test of time. Peter said:

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Peter asserts that God’s Word will “endure forever.” The word “forever” is the same word used in Revelation 14:6, where the “everlasting gospel” is spoken of. The prophet Isaiah, speaking 700 years before Christ came to the earth said, “So shall my word that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11).

Again, think of what Jesus said when talking to the apostles about the impending doom of Jerusalem: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35). So the question we must ask is this: “Could God not see that His Word would be relinquished to the corruption of an apostate church?”

Another question would obviously be, “Is God not powerful enough to stop finite humanity from thwarting His plans?” I am reminded of the words of Solomon: “I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him” (Eccl. 3:14). Indeed, the Bible has weathered the storms of hostility, yet still stands, just as God said it would.

Background Of The Book Of Mormon

The **Book Of Mormon** is the claimed history of the origins of two great civilizations that existed in the Americas before the year 1492. According to the account, there have been two great migrations to America. The first is said to have been in 2,250 B.C. It is purported that these people lived around the time of the tower of Babel (see Gen. 11).

As the sojourners approached the sea, they were instructed to build large barges in order to cross. Upon completion of the “heavenly blueprint,” the people complained to the Lord that He had forgotten to put something in the design of the barges. God had forgotten to put windows or holes in the barges, and the people knew that, once they closed the door, they would suffocate. The Lord commanded that two round windows be cut in the barges. One was to be cut in the roof and another in the bottom of each barge. The people again complained that the water would rush into the barge if a hole were cut in the bottom. The Lord then commanded them to plug up the hole in the bottom of the barges.³

The people that left the Old World arrived safely on the West Coast of Central America some 340 days later. Here, the Jaredites built a large civilization.⁴ However, these men were men of war and consequently exterminated themselves.

The most important journey consisted of pilgrims from Jerusalem (righteous Jews) whose leader was Nephi and his sons. It is purported that they landed in Central America about 600 B.C. Upon arrival, they erected a large and industrious civilization. However, Laman, a son of Nephi, rebelled against his father. As a result, God cursed him with black skin (2 Nephi 5:21). This divided the people into two main warring factions, the Nephites and the Lamanites. The descendents of Laman are the American Indians.

After the Lord was resurrected, Jesus came to the Nephites; preached the Gospel to them; and instituted baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other edicts. The Lamanites proved to be too strong for the Nephites, and, after several great battles, the Nephites were annihilated, except for one man by the name of Mormon. He collected the history of his people and engraved them on golden plates. He then took the plates and buried them in a hill in Palmyra, New York.⁵

After Mormon's death, he reappeared in 1827 as an angel by the name of Moroni. He revealed to Joseph Smith the location of the plates. Upon receiving the vision, Smith found the plates and translated the "Reformed Egyptian" with the aid of a pair of magical spectacles. Thus, the **Book Of Mormon** was born.

The Book of Mormon's Origin

If you were to open the front cover of the **Book Of Mormon**, you would read the testimony of the three witnesses. It reads:

BE IT KNOWN unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain the record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift of the power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by

the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery
David Whitmer
Martin Harris⁶

This is seemingly strong evidence for the validity of the book. However, what the Mormon church conveniently forgets to tell us is that all three of these “witnesses” apostatized from the Mormon church. In a letter that Joseph Smith wrote on December 16, 1838, “Such characters...John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are too mean to mention; and **we had liked to have forgotten them**”⁷ (emp. mine throughout, SL). So much for their testimony!

If you were to look at the next testimony in the book, you will see that eight men signed their names to an abbreviated witness:

BE IT KNOWN unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which have been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen the hefted, and know of a

surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer	Hiram Page
Jacob Whitmer	Joseph Smith, Sen.
Peter Whitmer, Jun.	Hyrum Smith
John Whitmer	Samuel H. Smith

Some of these individuals (e.g., John Whitmer and Hiram Page) were considered fanatical.⁸ It should also be observed that three of the witnesses were members of Joseph Smith's family. Four of the eight witnesses were Whitmers, related to David Whitmer, and Hiram Page had married a Whitmer. Mark Twain said, "I could not feel more satisfied and at rest if the entire Whitmer family had testified."

Even though the credibility of these men is seriously challenged because of the relationship they sustained to one another, we are still left with this astounding fact: the eight witnesses did not claim to have seen the golden plates miraculously given to Joseph Smith, nor to have witnessed any supernatural event, for that matter. They simply claimed to see some plates that had "the appearance of gold."

As Weldon Langfield says, "These witnesses only surmised that the 'ancient records' were miraculously delivered."⁹ Apparently, the prophet was pressured into giving some sort of evidence for his translation, so he responded to his critics by providing something that looked like the plates he had talked about. This is totally different from the "credibility" of the witnesses in the introduction to the book!

Its Real Origin

There is a diversity of opinion as to the true authenticity of the book. Some claim that Smith actually wrote the book, but that is not accepted by most scholars

today. Most scholars think that the book was originally a romantic novel written by Solomon Spalding.¹⁰ It was evident that Smith had access to this book and then reworked it by inserting religious material into it. A handwriting analysis of the original text of the **Book Of Mormon** reveals that the bulk of the manuscript is in the handwriting of Spalding and not Smith.¹¹ Mormon scholars try to argue that the ideas in the **Book Of Mormon** were so new and startling that they could not be a part of any existing work. However, the idea that the Jews had migrated to the New World was around during this time. As Robert Morey says, “The idea was first mentioned by Manasseh Ben Israel in his book, **The Hope Of Israel** in 1650.”¹² His book was first printed in Latin, Spanish, and English, and stirred up a great deal of hullabaloo.

Insurmountable Problems

Since the **Book Of Mormon** was published, there have been nearly 4,000 changes between the original publications in 1830 and the ones printed and issued through the mid-1970s. The 1982 addition introduced between one and two hundred additional word changes.¹³ The official LDS church magazine, **The Ensign**, attempts to explain these problems:

Most changes correct typographical errors, misspellings, matters of grammar or style—such as changing singular to plural—and incorporate corrections made by the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹⁴

This may sound like a reasonable explanation. However, the translation process of the **Book Of Mormon** will not allow this feeble attempt to explain away the incongruity. Observe what David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the **Book Of Mormon**, wrote regarding the translation process:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read it off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God and not by any of man.¹⁵

Again, Joseph F. Smith, who became the sixth president of the Mormon church, taught that the Lord gave Joseph Smith **the exact English wording and spelling** that should be used in the **Book Of Mormon**:

Saturday Feb. 25, 1881...Heard Joseph F. Smith describe the manner of translating the Book of Mormon...Joseph did not render the writing on the gold plates into the English language in his own style of language as many people believe, but every word and every letter was given to him by the gift and power of God...The Lord caused each word spelled as it is in the book to appear on the stones in short sentences or words, and when Joseph had uttered the sentence or word before him and the scribe had written it properly, that sentence would disappear and another appear. And if there was a word wrongly written or even a letter incorrect the writing on the stones would remain there...and when corrected the sentence would disappear as usual.¹⁶

According to the church, following the translation of the **Book Of Mormon**, Joseph Smith said he heard a voice from out of a bright light above him that said:

These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.¹⁷

It would appear that there was not any margin for error in the translation of this book—let alone 4000!

Notice with me a few changes from the original translation to the present and ask yourself the question, “Are these simply errors of misspellings, matters of grammar or style—such as changing singular to plural?”

The 1830 version of 1 Nephi 11:21 says, “And the angel said unto me, Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even **the eternal father**.” **Today’s version** says, “And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea even the **son of the eternal Father**.”

The 1830 version of 1 Nephi 11:32 says:

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, **the everlasting God** was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

Today’s version says:

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, **the Son of the everlasting God** was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

The 1830 version of Mosiah 21:28 says, “**King Benjamin** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings.” **Today’s version** says, “**King Mosiah** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings.”

As you can see, these errors are hardly misspellings or grammatical errors (although the original is full of them).

We have a mix-up of the Father and His Son, and we also have a completely different king inserted! Jerald and Sandra Tanner write, “From chronology found in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 6:3-7 and 7:1), it would appear that king Benjamin should have been dead at this time. The name, therefore, was changed to Mosiah.”¹⁸

Consider the plagiarism of the King James Version of the Bible. At least 25,000 words are identical matches between the two books. For example, Mosiah 14 is a duplicate of Isaiah 53. 3 Nephi 13:1-23 is a copy of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 6:1-23. Moroni 7:45 is copied from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Moroni 7:48 is 1 John 3:2. Moroni 10:8-17 is taken directly from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. So it becomes quite obvious that the author of the **Book Of Mormon** had a copy of the King James Bible in front of him when he wrote the famed book.

There is, however, a serious problem with this: the KJV is an **uninspired translation** of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into the English language from the turn of the seventeenth century, completed in 1611. But God gave the Old Testament to the Israelites in **their** native language (Hebrew), and He gave the New Testament in the first century in the **common language** of **that** day (Greek).¹⁹ Now here is the question that must be asked: why in the world would God give His Word to Joseph Smith in **nineteenth-century America** (1830), not in **American** English, but in **the British language of seventeenth-century England**? The obvious answer to the question is that **God would not do so**. This absurdity is inconsistent with the nature of God.²⁰

Archaeological Findings

This author has explored several websites by the LDS church that purport to prove the veracity of the **Book Of Mormon**. A brochure back in the early 1990’s was issued

by Brigham Young University advertising travel study tours to Central and South America. They say:

Though we cannot speak authoritatively or precisely about the location of **Book of Mormon** sites, we can—by a visit to Mesoamerica—create a mental tapestry resembling the land and circumstances in which the story actually occurred.²¹

Surely, if there were huge cities with large populations of Nephites and Lamanites, there would be some sort of evidence to support their claims (Mormon 6:9-15). After all, civilizations have been unearthed because of the Bible's pinpoint historical accuracy. Surely, a book that is superior to the Bible would be able to do such as well!

The Smithsonian Institute has acknowledged the Bible as an historically accurate book. Now, it is true that they do not deem it inerrant; nevertheless, they acknowledge its scientific accuracy. With that in mind, I decided to contact the institute myself. This is what I wrote:

Hello,

My name is Scott Lambert and I am writing a manuscript on the **Book Of Mormon** for a religious book. I understand that you do not deem the book as a credible historical book.

Could you please send me any info you have as to why?

Thanks,
Scott Lambert

This is the response they sent back to me:

This letter from the Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology is in response to your inquiry regarding the **Book Of Mormon**. The Smithsonian considers the **Book Of Mormon** a religious document and not a scientific guide. The Smithsonian Institution has never used it in archaeological research and has found no

archaeological evidence to support its claims. Thank you for your interest in the Smithsonian Institution.

Department of Anthropology
Smithsonian Institution
2004

In Don Simpson's book on Mormonism, he has a photocopy of a letter written by the Smithsonian with further elaboration:

Statements Regarding The Book of Mormon

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.
2. The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. Archaeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World—probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Strait region during the last Ice Age—in a continuing series of small migrations beginning about 30,000 years ago.
3. Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen who arrived in the northeastern part of North America around A.D. 1000. There is nothing to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.
4. There is a possibility that the spread of cultural traits across the Pacific to Mesoamerica and the northwestern coast of South America began several thousand years before the Christian era. However, these appear to be the result of accidental voyages originating in eastern and southern Asia and show no relationship to ancient Egyptian or Hebrew cultures.
5. We know of no authentic cases of ancient Egyptian or Hebrew writing having been found in the New World. Reports of findings of

Egyptian influence in the Mexican and Central American areas have been published in newspapers and magazines from time to time, but thus far no reputable Egyptologists have been able to discover any relationship between Mexican remains and those in Egypt.

6. There are copies of the Book of Mormon in the library of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.²²

Therefore, the claims of Mormon archaeologists that entire civilizations have been found as a result of the **Book Of Mormon** are incongruous. Listen to the honesty of one Mormon anthropologist, M. Wells Jakeman:

It must be confessed that some members of the Mormon or Latter-day Saint Church are prone, in their enthusiasm for the Book of Mormon, to make claims for it that cannot be supported. So far as is known to the writer, no non-Mormon archaeologist holds that the American Indians are descendants of the Jews, or that Christianity was known in America in the first century of our era. This in itself, of course, does not disprove the Book of Mormon; for not enough is yet known of the actual period of that record in ancient America, or of the origin of the American Indians, for a final judgment at this time, scientifically speaking.²³

When reading the **Book Of Mormon**, we are not talking about evidence so minuscule that there is no way it could be found. Far from that! The **Book Of Mormon** speaks of massive populations and civilizations that covered the Americas. For example Mormon 1:7 says, “The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea.” According to Ether 9:23, they “did build many cities.” The **Book Of Mormon** further mentions extensive shipping, temple-building, all types of tools, and coinage of gold and silver. Helaman 3:14 refers to “their

shipping, and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries.” Allegedly, steel was even found in the Americas long before it was found anywhere else in the world (1 Nephi 4:9). Yet there is not a shred of evidence to support these claims!

In a letter dated February 4, 1982, the National Geographic Society denied that archaeologists placed any weight on the **Book Of Mormon**:

Neither the Society nor any other institution of equal prestige has ever used the Book of Mormon in locating archaeological sites. Although many Mormon sources claim that the Book of Mormon has been substantiated by archaeological findings, this claim has not been verified scientifically.

Due to the intense heat (and rightly so) that has been placed upon the historicity of the **Book Of Mormon**, Dee Green, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Weber State College wrote:

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists...If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not...No Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are.²⁴

The LDS argument, that archaeology substantiates the Book of Mormon, as compelling as it may sound to some, will not work. There have been civilizations that were unearthed because of the Bible’s accuracy. Our LDS friends cannot even give us one from a book that is purported to be “the most correct of any book on earth.”²⁵

False Prophecies

1. The New Jerusalem and its temple are to be built by the Mormons **then living** in western Missouri: “For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord” (D & C 84:1-5). It is important to point out that our friends refer to this and say that the prophecy came to fruition. However, the text will not allow it, since “this generation” is referred to in the text. Of course, in speaking of the New Jerusalem, Biblically, it was not to be a physical, literal temple. In Revelation 21:22, John said, “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”

2. In **Doctrine And Covenants**, New York, Albany, and Boston are to be destroyed by God if they do not accept the teachings of Joseph Smith (84:112-115). Newel Whitney went to these cities and said, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” Yet, these cities did not convert and are still standing today.

3. The Lord told Joseph Smith in April 1838 that Far West, Missouri is holy ground, consecrated unto Him, and Smith’s followers were to “build a house” in Far West beginning in July 4, 1838 (D&C 115:7-10). However, this never took place, yet, in the same book (3:1-3), Smith says, “The purposes of God cannot be frustrated.”

4. Smith predicted that the Civil War would involve many nations:

For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and the war shall be poured out upon all nations. And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war (D&C 87:3-4).

History shows that none of these prophecies came to fruition. If they had just consulted Deuteronomy 18:22, then the religion might not be where it is today!

Contradictions Exposed

One of the most controversial doctrines in the LDS church is polygamy. The **Book Of Mormon** addresses the issue frequently with conflicting positions. In Jacob 2:26-28 we read:

Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

Observe in the passage that polygamy is forbidden because it violates the “chastity of women.” It is morally unacceptable and viewed as “whoredoms” and “an abomination” to God. Again, in Ether 10:5, the same book says, “And it came to pass that Riplakish did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he did have many wives and concubines.” So far so good. Here was a man that was not pleasing to God for his polygamous violation. Yet the **Doctrine And Covenants** flatly contradicts the **Book Of Mormon** on this point:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, **justified** my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines— Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you;

for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an **everlasting** covenant; and if ye abide not in that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory...David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, **from the beginning of creation until this time**; and **in nothing did they sin** save in those things which they received not of me. David's wives and concubines were given unto him **of me**, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and **in none of these things did he sin** against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife (132:1-4, 38-39).

In one instance, polygamy is looked upon as an abomination, and then, in another instance, it is looked upon as being justified! To further show that Mr. Smith was not a prophet of God, he slips up in Jacob 2:27 and makes an ignorant mistake with reference to a man being permitted only one wife, but “concubines he shall have none.” This reference portrays ignorance of the use of Biblical terminology. A “concubine” in antiquity was a **wife**—not a **mistress**.²⁶ An inspired writer ought to know this!

The **Book Of Mormon** also contradicts the Mormon teaching of God. In Ether 2:8, the book describes Deity as singular:

And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, **the true and only God**, or they should be swept of when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them.

Again, in **Pearl Of Great Price**, Moses 2:9-10 reads:

And I, God said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place and it was so. And I, God called the dry land Earth; and

the gathering together of the waters, called I the Sea; and I God saw that all things which I had made were good.

Yet, elsewhere in **Pearl Of Great Price**, Abraham 4:9-10 reads:

And **the Gods ordered**, saying: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place and let the earth come up dry and it was so as they ordered and **the Gods** pronounced the dry land, earth; and the gathering together of the waters, pronounced they, great waters; **and the Gods** saw that they were obeyed.

The **Book Of Mormon** contradicts the Mormon teaching that baptism is not essential for salvation. In **Doctrine And Covenants** 20:37, the text says, “All who humble themselves...and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.” Clearly, this passage asserts that remission of sins precedes baptism. Yet, in the **Book Of Mormon**, we read, “Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized for they...shall...receive a remission of their sins” (3 Nephi 12:2).

The **Book Of Mormon** also teaches that death seals a man’s fate. Alma 34:33 says, “If we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein **there can be no labor performed.**” Yet, in **Doctrine And Covenants** 88:99, we find:

Another angel shall sound, which is the second trump; and then cometh the redemption of those who are Christ’s at his coming; who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, **that they might receive the gospel**, and be judged according to men in the flesh.

It is apparent from these quotations that the books of Mormonism contradict themselves concerning whether man will have a second chance!

The Books Of Mormonism Contradict The Bible

Our friends think that Mormonism is simply the restored church of the first century (D&C 1:31). But, if it is the case that they are the restored church, then their doctrines must match those of the primitive church of the first century. Do they? Not hardly! Consider the following:

The Doctrine Of God

Our friends teach that God was once a mortal man just like us (D&C 130). In fact, they take this a step further and argue that we, too, can become a god just like Him. Observe the following from Joseph Smith:

God was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! ...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil, so that you may see...It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.²⁷

Not only can we become a god, but, according to Mormon teachings, there are multiple gods. Orson Pratt said, "If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds."²⁸

What does the Bible say on this subject? Notice the words of the Lord through His prophet Isaiah:

“You are My witnesses,” says the LORD, And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. **Before me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me** (Isa. 43:10).

Again, in the same book, notice what the Lord says: “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God**” (Isa. 44:6).

The Birth Place Of Jesus

The **Book Of Mormon** teaches that Jesus was born “at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers” (Alma 7:10). An LDS apologist has written:

Here and in many other passages, Jerusalem is described as a land, not just a city. Bethlehem is a tiny suburb of Jerusalem, just 5 miles away from the heart of the city. Not only does Bethlehem properly fall within the “land of Jerusalem,” making the **Book of Mormon** correct, but use of that term is surprising evidence of the authenticity of the **Book of Mormon**.²⁹

2 Kings 14:20 is used to buttress the argument where the Sacred text says, “Then he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the City of David.” Wayne Jackson has done an excellent job in answering the quibble by saying:

Lindsay labors under the illusion that the Bible supports the Bethlehem/Jerusalem identification due to the fact that Jerusalem is designated as “the city of David” in the Old Testament (2 Kings 14:20), while the New Testament also refers to Bethlehem as “the city of David” (Luke 2:4). But the gentleman’s argument is faulty. He seems unaware that both Jerusalem and Bethlehem were designated as “the city of David”—not because they were the same city, or that biblical writers had them confused, but for different

reasons. Bethlehem was so depicted because it was the birthplace of the great king (1 Sam. 17:12). On the other hand, when the ancient city of Jebus was conquered by David, his name was attached to the stronghold in honor of the event (1 Chron. 11:5-7). Actually, within this same Old Testament context “Jerusalem” is set apart from “Bethlehem.” The sacred writer subsequently points out that while David was at the “stronghold” (i.e., Jerusalem—1 Chron. 11:5), the Philistines were at Bethlehem (1 Chron. 11:16).

Baptism For The Dead

Was this a teaching of the primitive church? Consider the words of Robert L. Millet, associate professor and chairman of the department of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University: “Baptism for the dead was indeed a practice of the Church of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time. We know it was restored in our own dispensation through the Prophet Joseph Smith.”³⁰ Does this contradict the Bible?

The position taken by our friends is based upon a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 15:29, which says, “Otherwise, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised, why then are they baptized for them?” It has rightly been said that a text taken out of context is a pretext. You have to study this passage in connection with what has already been said. For twenty-eight verses, Paul has been developing the point that there will be a general resurrection of the dead by virtue of the fact that there has been a resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, based upon that, if you are going to doubt or deny the validity of the resurrection of either, then what about those who have been baptized for the dead?

We need to make 2 points from the text that are extremely important. First, the word “dead” is plural in the original language, meaning “dead ones.” Second, “for”

in the text is the Greek word *gar*. Without any knowledge of the original language, you could see that. The Greek word “for” means “in reference to.” So the text is saying, “What shall they do, who are baptized ‘in reference to’ the dead ones?”

So the gist of the text is this: if there is going to be no resurrection, then why be baptized in reference to the dead ones—that is, in prospect of a glad reunion with your dead loved ones, which reunion would necessitate a resurrection from the dead?

I know the text cannot be referring to a second chance after death because of what the Bible teaches regarding our fate at death (Heb. 9:27). In the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, a discussion takes place between a rich man in torment and Abraham in paradise. The rich man desperately wants to pass over to the side of paradise. Notice what Abraham says, throwing up a red flag to proxy baptism as taught by our LDS friends: “And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us” (Luke 16:30). Notice the word “fixed” in the original text. It is in a perfect tense, passive voice which means, “Permanently fixed by God.” So God set it up after you die that you will go to your reward with abiding results!

Conclusion

Time and space will not allow us to elaborate any more on the doctrines taught by the LDS church. I think the honest heart can see from just a small study as this that the books of Mormonism do not compare with the Bible; they even contradict the Bible. The fact is that Joseph Smith did not restore the New Testament church. He established something diametrically opposed to the primitive church.

The Bible said the church would always exist (Eph. 3:21; Matt. 16:18; Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28). We plead with all to be a part of this arrangement that was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:9-11).

Endnotes

1 Bruce McConkie, **Mormon Doctrine**, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991) p. 82.

2 James Talmage, **Articles Of Faith**, p. 215.

3 This unbelievable story can be found in Ether 2 in the Book Of Mormon. The very thought that humans had more common sense than God is as irreverent and blasphemous as you can get. So much for the Lord's omniscience!

4 Robert Morey, **The Sacred Books Of Mormonism**, www.faithdefenders.com.

5 Ibid.

6 Joseph Smith, **The Book Of Mormon** (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981 reprint), p. 2.

7 Weldon Langfield, **The Truth About Mormonism**, (Langfield Publications), p. 36.

8 Joseph Smith, **Doctrine And Covenants** (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), 28:11.

9 Langfield, p. 37.

10 For further reading, see G. B. Arbaugh, **Revelations In Mormonism** (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1932); James D. Bales, **The Book Of Mormon** (Rosemead, CA: Old Path Book Club, 1958); Eber D. Howe, **Mormonism Unveiled**, (Painsville: Published by author, 1834); James H. Snowsen, **The Truth About Mormonism** (New York, George Durant, 1926).

11 Morey. Also, this material can be found in a book written by Cowdrey, Davis, and Scales, **Who Wrote The Book Of Mormon?** (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1977) pp. 117-18.

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13 Marian Bodine, **Reasoning From The Scriptures With The Mormons** (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995).

14 **The Ensign** (October 1981), p. 19.

15 Bodine. Also found in David Whitmer, **An Address To All Believers In Christ** (Concord, CA: Pacific Publishing, 1976 reprint).

16 "Journal of Oliver B. Huntington," Typed copy at Utah State Historical Society, Jerald & Sandra Tanner, **Major Problems Of Mormonism** (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1973), p. 161.

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- 18 Tanner, p. 160.
19 Dave Miller, **Is The Book Of Mormon From God?**, www.apologeticspress.com.
20 Ibid.
21 Langfield, p. 38.
22 Don Simpson, **The Golden Myth Of Mormonism** (Wichita Falls, TX: 1990) pp. 238-39.
23 **U.A.S. Newsletter**, No. 57 (March 25, 1959), p. 4. Quoted by Simpson, p. 240.
24 Dee F. Green, **Dialogue: A Journal Of Mormon Thought** (Summer 1969), pp. 76-77. Quoted by Bodine.
25 Joseph Smith, **History Of The Church**, Vol. 4, p. 461.
26 Victor P. Hamilton, **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament**, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Jr., & Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980). Quoted by Miller.
27 **Times And Seasons**, Volume 5, p. 613.
28 **Journal Of Discourses**, Volume 2, p. 345.
29 Jeff Lindsay, **Why Does Alma 7:10 Say Christ Was Born In Jerusalem?**, www.jefflindsay.com.
30 Robert Millet, **A Sure Foundation: Answers To Difficult Gospel Questions** (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1988) p. 106.

CHAPTER 20

Over The Koran

Gary Summers

Introduction

FOR AMERICANS, *THE QUESTION* as to why one should believe the Bible over the Koran may seem obvious and, therefore, uninteresting, but, for those living in Muslim countries, such a question is constantly relevant. Can we even imagine what it would be like to be taught from infancy that the Koran is God's message to mankind? How would we react if someday we heard of something called **The Holy Bible**, which was totally foreign to us?

One way we can understand the response to those who have never been exposed to the Word of God is to consider the long-standing errors and assumptions in our culture. Denominationalism has been accepted for nearly 400 years; when we try to explain the truth of the matter, people frequently stare at us as though it were five minutes after God confounded everyone's language at Babel. If we tell them we do not use instruments of music in worship, they act as if we said we were abducted by aliens. Although most preachers take great care to explain why we are not pastors, those outside the body of Christ follow our logic about like a fourth-grader understands calculus. If we say we do not observe Christmas as the birthday of Jesus, they muse, "Poor fellow. Wonder who he thinks is buried in Grant's tomb."

The Israelites who followed Jeroboam soon grew accustomed to the golden calves in Dan and Bethel. After

they had been in place for a century, what kind of success would anyone from Judah have had in convincing them that their worship of the one true God was wrong? “Why, we’ve been worshiping this way ever since I can remember. We’re aware of different customs in the south, but we are satisfied with our practices here in the north.” Likewise, many who live in Muslim countries may be aware of religious differences, but most have no motivation to learn anything other than what they already have been taught. After all, they have believed in Allah and Muhammad for 1,500 years. Why should they believe the Bible over the Koran?

Reason #1: The Freedom To Evaluate

The first and fundamental reason highlights a major difference between the two religions: the Bible invites investigation, but the Koran does not. Both books claim to be from God, which will be given further consideration in the next section. Both claim to be authoritative, and both carry a penalty if they are rejected. The difference lies in the time period in which the punishment is assessed. Failure to obey the Koran merits retribution now; repudiation of the Bible will be dealt with on the Day of Judgment.

Rejection of either the Bible or the Koran is a very serious decision, but God allows a person the opportunity to change his mind as long as he lives; Allah is not so gracious. A comparison of the two will establish this assertion. Jesus taught that “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men” (Matt. 12:31).¹ Many agree that the blasphemy against the Spirit involved a rejection of the evidence concerning the Deity of Christ—the evidence that the Holy Spirit provided in the signs, miracles, and wonders that Jesus did.

In fact, Jesus specifically healed a paralytic by saying, “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” so that all would know that He had that power (Mark 2:5; Mark 2:9-10). The miracles that He did established the validity of His teachings. The healed man arose immediately, took up his bed, and walked away; the people were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” (Mark 2:12).

The followers of Muhammad never saw anything like this because he did no miracles to establish the truth of his teachings. The miracles were the basis of people’s belief in Jesus; John recorded many of these supernatural events when he wrote his Gospel account of the life of Christ—so that all might believe (John 20:30-31).

Jesus made clear that His Word must be believed. Every Muslim should give due consideration to these words: “He who rejects Me and receives not My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Now everyone has the freedom to accept or reject it, but the time is coming (when the Lord returns) when that option will no longer exist. In the meantime, there is no penalty for questioning, analyzing, meditating upon, or mulling over the teachings of Jesus and His claims of Deity, proven by His miracles. One can reject the truth for several years but be forgiven for all of that unbelief—so long as he becomes obedient before he dies or before the world comes to a close. The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul was teaching was accurate concerning the Christ (Acts 17:11).

Christianity does not imprison, threaten, or intimidate anyone for being open-minded and taking time to come to a knowledge of the truth. Even if Christianity is rejected, the followers of Jesus have no Biblical authority to persecute or harm anyone. In fact, Jesus taught us to

love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us (Matt. 5:43-48). We are content to let Jesus judge all at the end of time (John 5:22; John 5:27) and spend our time encouraging others to trust Him.

The Muslim religion does not believe in these principles of freedom and investigation. Fran McClure wrote about her experience of living in a Muslim-dominated country:

The first thing you learn even before you get there is that Islam is the only religion allowed in Saudi Arabia. No other religion is tolerated. Nor can you speak about another religion to the locals. Muslims can tell you all about their religion, but you cannot speak to them about yours, or practice your religion in their country. Therefore, we had to smuggle our Bibles into their country.²

Christian worship services are forbidden. Those of us who chose to worship did so on Sunday as commanded in the Bible. We had services in our homes, or in the homes of other Christians.³

The worship services I've mentioned above were all conducted in secret. Had we been discovered, our husbands would have lost their jobs in that country, and we would have been deported within 48 hours.⁴

This practice of squelching opposing viewpoints is not an aberration; it is the overriding philosophy of the Muslim religion, as taught in the Koran. This book contains 144 suras (also spelled "surahs") which present occasional threats to those who reject its message. After referring to the fate of those in Sodom and in Egypt who followed hard-hearted Pharaoh, Muhammad writes in Sura 54:43-48 (which is titled "The Moon"):

Are your infidels, O Meccans, better men than these? Is there an exemption for you in the

sacred Books? Will they say, "We are a host that will lend one another aid?" The host will then be routed, and they shall turn them back. But, that hour is their threatened time, and that Hour shall be most severe and bitter. Verily the wicked are sunk in bewilderment and folly. On that day they shall be dragged into the fire on their faces, "Taste ye the touch of Hell."⁵

The Koran is not content to allow people the time to think and evaluate what it says. It must be believed—or else. In fact, it is through the sword that the religion of Islam spread and threatened to devour the entire world. Robert Payne, who wrote **The History Of Islam**, talks about a point in time in which Muhammad turned into "a ruthless conqueror." He began by sending out small raiding parties to intercept caravans and escalated over the years.⁶ Payne also wrote, "Muhammad envisaged a time when the whole world would be conquered by the sword for Islam."⁷

What Muslims ought to ask themselves is, "What does truth have to fear from honest investigation?" Christians are willing for the Bible to be studied, criticized, and evaluated by others; why cannot Muslims be equally tolerant? Truth should not suffer from honest discussion or debate. The "believe this or else" philosophy has always been a dangerous one, whether applied religiously or politically (as in communism). Those who are forced to believe have no clue whether what they "believe" is true, and, essentially, it matters little for most people. Those who wish to stay alive will go along with whatever anybody in power says. Undoubtedly, most consider survival to be the expedient course of action.

Furthermore, freedom to agree or disagree is the way God made us. In the New Testament, God pleads with us to obey His will. He does not kill His opponents or those who choose false religion. He gives them time to change their minds while they are physically alive. If they,

throughout their lifetimes, continue to ignore His pleas, then they will be judged. Killing infidels removes any possibility of future compliance. If there is a beginning point where Muslims might begin to reexamine what they have been taught, perhaps this ferocity toward others, as taught in the Koran, may trigger some doubt. They should ask themselves, “How valid can a religion be that is spread by physical violence and fear?”

What would be the point of God’s creating us and forcing us to obey? If forceful obedience was all that He wanted, He would have created us precisely that way—without free will. Then we would always be obedient—since He would have programmed us to be so. The fact that we **choose** to comply or rebel proves that He made us with the ability to think and reason—even if we do so imperfectly at times. The fact that human beings can choose to be Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, or Hindus demonstrates again our independence. Since God, therefore, gave us the liberty to make our own decisions, then there must be something fundamentally wrong with any religion claiming to be from God that would then take away our autonomy. It makes no sense, in other words, for God to furnish us with a mind and the ability to reason through these matters, and then have His followers seek to remove the God-given freedom we have to do so. The religion of Islam, when allowed free reign, takes away the liberty God gave to all mankind, thus putting it at odds with the One Who made everything.

Reason #2: The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God

Both the Bible and the Koran claim to be inspired of God. The phrase, “Thus saith the Lord” (or a close approximate), occurs at least 40 times in the book of Isaiah, 155 times in the book of Jeremiah, and 105 times in the

book of Ezekiel. The phrase also appears numerous times in other books, and inspiration is claimed in other ways as well (Num. 23:12; Jer. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; et al.). Paul actually said: "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

The Koran likewise affirms that its source is God: "It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds" (Sura 53:79). It claims to be "a marvelous discourse" that "guideth to all truth" (Sura 72:1-2):

And this Koran which we have sent down is a blessed warning: will ye then disown it? (Sura 21:51).

Have no doubts about the Book for it is the very truth from thy Lord (Sura 11:20).

And to thee we have sent down the Book of the Koran with truth, confirmatory of previous Scriptures, and their safeguard (Sura 5:52).

Another twenty similar claims are made for the inspiration of the Koran, which indicates that Muhammad was not bashful concerning his "revelations."

Obviously, since both the Bible and the Koran do not lack for declarations of their inspiration, the question becomes, "How can we tell if a book is inspired by God?" Asserting this characteristic is not enough; there must be evidence. When we look at the Koran, we find that all of the Suras were composed by one man "during the 22 years of his prophetic office" (610-32).⁸ Yet we know that the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years by 40 different authors. One man, by himself, in one particular age and culture, could be mistaken or misguided that God is speaking to him. The odds are considerably less that 40 men, in agreement with one another, could all be wrong. Just as the twelve on the Day of Pentecost—all bearing

witness to the resurrection of the Christ—could not be successfully challenged, neither can the Bible’s inspiration, due to its many witnesses.

The New Testament writers accept the Scriptures penned from 450 to 2,000 years prior to their day (2 Pet. 1:20-21). They quote from them, show when things from them were fulfilled, endorse them, and thereby establish their authenticity. Jesus, without hesitation, attributes the Law to Moses (Matt. 19:8). Matthew records that Jesus spoke with both Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5). He also spoke of David (Matt. 12:3), Solomon (Matt. 6:29), and Jonah (Matt. 12:39), among others, and referred to Old Testament cities, such as Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 11:21).

It would be a study in itself to produce all the quotes of all the writers of the New Testament; this sampling, however, shows that those who wrote New Testament Scriptures accepted the validity of those already written. Not once did they challenge, contradict, or seek to negate what had already been recorded.

What about the New Testament, however? The fact is that Christians accepted these books. Our first-century brethren, especially those converted on the Day of Pentecost, had seen the miracles of Jesus and the apostles. They knew that Christ had arisen from the dead. They also knew that this miraculous event was prophesied by David (Acts 2). The fact that members of the church regarded these books as authoritative is sufficient proof of the books’ authenticity—that and the fact that they harmonize perfectly with the Old Testament.

Furthermore, as just mentioned, the miracles of Jesus and the apostles served to confirm the teaching that they did. After Christ arose from the dead, He commissioned the twelve to go into all the world and preach. The last verse of the Gospel of Mark observes: “And they went out

and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20). The writer of Hebrews says that the great salvation was first spoken by the Lord and then

was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will (Heb. 2:3-4).

Because the great miracles of Jesus provide solid proof for His various claims, they were written down by John so that people would believe He is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

How does the Koran compare with all that we have just noted? It does not. One man’s words over a twenty-two-year period cannot be seriously considered as equal to the writings of 40 men over a millennium-and-a-half. Muhammad did no miracles that would have served as confirmation of anything he taught. He won some military victories, but he did not heal the ear of any of his soldiers who were struck during a battle. He did not miraculously feed 5,000, walk on water, calm a storm, heal all the people in Mecca of their diseases, raise anyone from the dead, or arise himself. Although Muhammad refers to characters mentioned in the Bible, he includes nothing as a fulfillment of anything prophesied in either the Old or New Testaments. The reason for that silence is simple: nothing in the Bible could possibly be construed as applying to Him. He is not foretold because he is not part of God’s plan. Jesus brought redemption to all mankind, thus completing what God had in mind from the beginning.

He does try, however, to make a prophecy of Christ apply to himself. He writes:

And remember when Jesus the son of Mary said,
“O children of Israel! Of a truth I am God’s

apostle to you to confirm the law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle that shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad!" But when he (Ahmad) presented himself with clear proofs of his mission, they said, "That is manifest sorcery!" (Sura 61:6).

A footnote in this writer's edition of the Koran comments on this claim:

Muhammad had no doubt heard that Jesus had promised a *Paracletos*, John xvi. 7. This title, understood by him, probably from the similarity of sound, as equivalent to *Periclytos*, he applied to himself with reference to his own name Muhammad (i.e. *praise, glorified*) from the same root of the same meaning as Ahmad, also one of the Prophet's names.⁹

Jesus, however, was not speaking of some future, earthly leader; rather, He was explaining to His apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach **them** all things and bring to **their** remembrance all that Jesus had said to **them**. Therefore, Muhammad cannot be the one of whom the Lord spoke (John 14:25-26; John 16:12-13). Jesus means by the word *Paraclete* the Holy Spirit, Who bore witness of His Deity—rather than to Muhammad who denied it (see the section on Jesus). Therefore, Muhammad did try to claim fulfillment of a New Testament prophecy, but he failed miserably because he did not have an adequate knowledge of the Word. An inspired man could not have made this mistake.

The Muslims have the same problem as the premillennialists, though their doctrines differ. Both fail to notice that the Old Testament involves God's people living in an earthly kingdom. They fight physical battles, and much about their religion involves things that are tangible, including their worship's centering on the city of Jerusalem (or Dan and Bethel in the north). But then Jesus

comes along and raises religion onto a higher level. He teaches people to love their enemies instead of killing them (Matt. 5:43-48)! He and the apostles teach high moral standards that must descend from a pure heart (Matt. 15:18-20; Phil. 4:8). His followers must put off sins of the flesh and of attitude and dress themselves in new, fresh garments (Col. 3). Worship will no longer revolve around a certain city or country, such as Jerusalem or Samaria. Jesus tells the woman at the well that true worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:19-24).

This new system is inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost; Christianity is born of grace and love rather than fear. No one fights physical battles in the name of Jesus; He told Peter to put away his sword on the night He was betrayed and taken captive. The Gospel is spread through preaching, through teaching, and through benevolence. Christians are part of a spiritual kingdom. But then along comes Muhammad to reverse everything. With him in charge as God's new and latest prophet, he shuffles the deck and leads his followers back to the concept of a physical kingdom, established by military might—the kind of system from which Jesus delivered all mankind. Regardless of his earnestness or his success, Muhammad traveled in the wrong direction—he returned to an inferior style of religion.

The Bible follows a logical progression—from the physical to the spiritual to something even more spiritual (heaven itself); the Koran would have us move from the physical to the spiritual and back to the physical again. In fact, Muhammad even describes heaven in physical terms—no, not streets of gold, which symbolize the richness and purity of heaven—but with beautiful damsels “with large dark eyes, like pearls hidden in their shells, in recompense of their labours past” (Sura 56:22-23). Muslim men get to wed “virgins with large dark eyes” (Sura 44:54).

Everything about this religion is physical—even the rewards in the afterlife. The reason is that the author of the Koran, Muhammad, is depicted as “of the earth, earthy.”¹⁰ Despite its claims, the Koran is not inspired of God. It is the product of one man, communicated over a short period of time, and it is aimed at men (as opposed to women). It will not inspire anyone to nobility, to love others, or to do good to all mankind. It will and did inspire warriors to fight and kill and destroy—in anticipation of receiving a physical reward. The Bible, on the other hand, speaks to men and women concerning a quality spiritual life now (Matt. 7:12; Matt. 22:37-40) and heaven’s spiritual rewards later.

Reason #3: The Bible Is Free Of Contradictions

Over the centuries, the Bible has stood the test with respect to its soundness and integrity. Since the rise of Modernism, many have alleged that the Bible contains contradictions, but these charges have all been proven false. Many of the so-called “contradictions” result from misunderstandings on the part of the critics. In most cases, these self-appointed judges have read the Bible with a view toward finding flaws instead of achieving an understanding of the text. Most of the “errors” in the Bible reflect their ignorance. Occasionally, we find two passages that actually must be harmonized, but even those do not require a great deal of effort. No problem brought to view has ever been left unresolved for long.

The Koran does not contain contradictions within itself, but certain key factors bear on this observation. First, we must acquaint ourselves with the process by which the Koran came into existence. Muhammad did not write down his “revelations” from God; they were given in

oral form, which reflects Muhammad's true genius. The appeal of the suras is not their theological content; it is their sound. In the seventh century A.D., education was not a top priority for most people, who were simply trying to get by in desert cities. Muhammad's suras were a type of poetry that appealed to the **ears** of his followers. He and his men repeated them frequently; the sounds they made in Arabic were such that they were easy to remember.¹¹

After Muhammad's death, his men continued to repeat the suras, but it became obvious that his body of work would eventually become extinct. The "Preface" to the edition of the Koran being used in this study explains:

The scattered fragments of the Koran were in the first instance collected by his immediate successor Abu Bekr, about a year after the Prophet's death, at the suggestion of Omar, who foresaw that, as the Muslim warriors, whose memories were the sole depositories of large portions of the revelations, died off or were slain...the loss of the greater part, or even of the whole, was imminent.¹²

Of course, human memories can be deficient, so data was collected. After the suras had been written down, the determination was made to construct a standardized text. Once this feat had been accomplished, all other copies were burned. The reader will not find a Berry's **Interlinear** of the Koran that will show textual variations. A human editor made sure that only one standard text exists. Had there been any blatant contradictions in doctrine, they would have been removed at this time.

A second reason for a lack of contradictions is that only one man produced these suras over a 22-year period. Consistency with oneself is not nearly so difficult to achieve as harmony with 39 other men over a lengthy period of

time. A third reason for a lack of contradictions is that Muhammad did not communicate much that was theologically deep. The farther away one travels from basic principles, the easier it becomes to get lost on some side excursion. Muhammad never took that journey. He remained within the confines of simplicity. Fourth, many of his suras simply repeat what he has already said, thus lessening the opportunity for contradictions.

He did, however, contradict himself on one occasion with respect to one of his most fundamental doctrines. This oral delivery of major error is now referred to as “The Satanic Verses.” Author Salman Rushdie had a *fatwa* issued against him for writing a book by that title, but he did not fabricate the material. In fact, no enemy of the Muslim religion had anything to do with their origin. Muhammad himself spoke the following words in what was once Sura 53:19-20: “Have ye thought upon Al-Lat, al-Ussa and Manat, the third, the other?” Samuel Green explained the meaning of these words: “Al-Lat, al-Ussa, and Manat, were some of the local idols worshiped in Mecca. Previously, Muhammad had spoken against them.”¹³ Usually Muhammad was outspoken against idolatry, as the following samples indicate:

Set not up another god with God, lest thou sit thee down disgraced, helpless (Sura 17:23).

Set not up any other god with God, lest thou be cast into Hell, rebuked, cast away (Sura 17:41).

And I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of God; and Satan hath made their works fair seeming to them, so that he hath turned them from the Way (Sura 27:24).

Have they feet to walk with? Have they hands to hold with? Have they ears to hear with? (Sura 7:194, which echoes Psm. 115:4-7).

[T]he Polytheists...shall go into the fire of Gehenna to abide there for aye. Of all creatures they are the worst (Sura 98:5).

In addition to these general statements, Muhammad specifically exhorts people to cease worshiping Taghout, the popular idol of the day. He promises, "Whoever therefore shall deny Taghout and believe in God—he will have taken hold on a strong handle that shall not be broken" (Sura 2:257). With all of these (and more) denunciations of idolatry, why would Muhammad have spoken something favorable concerning them?

According to Dr. Ernest Hahn, this aberration occurred when Muhammad's "followers were few," he was estranged from his tribe, and he "longed for better relations and reconciliation with his community."¹⁴ In other words, it was a temporary compromise, and it achieved the desired effect: "after this revelation was completed, Muhammad, his followers and the pagan Arabs all prostrated. Tensions eased, reconciliation was at hand, and all were delighted."¹⁵ But Muhammad soon changed his mind:

These words, however, which were received by the idolaters with great exultation, were disowned by Muhammad in the course of a few days as a Satanic suggestion, and replaced by the text as it now stands. The probability is that the difficulties of his position led him to attempt a compromise of which he speedily repented.¹⁶

"The Satanic Verses" are not a new discovery. The comments of Rodwell above were made in 1909, nearly 100 years ago. Nor would anyone have known about these verses except that they have been preserved for nearly 1400 years by Muslims: "If this story was told by people opposed to Islam then it would be fair to question whether they had invented this story as a way of discrediting Muhammad."¹⁷ The fact of their preservation by Muslims testifies to their authenticity.

Obviously, when Muhammad spoke the original words, he was motivated by the pressures of the day, a temptation to which Biblical writers never succumbed. No one can envision Jeremiah ever entertaining such an action in order to be popular with the sinful leaders in Jerusalem. Paul never contemplated compromise in order to further the spread of the Gospel. If there is one message that we find repeatedly in the Word of God, it is that Truth is to be proclaimed **regardless of its reception**. Stephen proclaimed it, though it cost him his life.

Muhammad contradicted himself and his otherwise firm position against idolatry. Realizing what he had done, he attributed the words to Satan. Perhaps with a view toward justifying himself, the founder of the Muslim religion revealed in Sura 22:51 that God told him, “We have not sent any apostle or prophet before thee, among whose desires Satan injected some wrong desire, but God shall bring to nought that which Satan had suggested.”

How convenient! How is it, in light of what Muhammad already knew concerning idolatry, that he did not get suspicious of a “revelation” that exalted some local idols? Why did it take him **a few days** to realize the mistake? And where is his proof that any apostle or prophet ever received a Satanic suggestion, much less wrote it down? Even with the variations that exist in certain Biblical texts, not a single verse contradicts any other revealed passage of Scripture. None of the Bible writers ever had to resort to saying, “Oops, I was listening to Satan instead of God when I spoke or wrote those words.”

Reason #4: Bible Doctrine Is Not Built On Questionable Sources

Not only did the inspired writers of the Bible say they were inspired, they also did not preach the wisdom

of their time. The Egyptians were idolaters, for example, yet the first two commands that Moses records specifically forbid the nation of Israel from making any graven images or having any other gods before Jehovah. (Neither did Moses “slip” and permit it on some subsequent occasion.) The latest “scientific” theory in this day was that man had evolved from the white worms in the Nile, yet Moses wrote, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Even today, uninspired denominational leaders, as well as the recently deceased leader of the Roman Catholic church, are willing to accommodate the theory of evolution by giving credence to it, but Moses never entertained such a notion—nor did Christ or His apostles. The reason they did not err and include the conventional wisdom of their time was that they were genuinely inspired of God.

Muhammad, however, was not. He used source material that was accepted in his day, thus disproving his claim to be inspired. He himself admits: “I am no apostle of new doctrines” (Sura 46:8). In this statement, he is a bit too modest (considering the Satanic verses), but his claim is largely true. He is not particularly original; he certainly was not a great scholar: “Learning he has none, or next to none. His chief objects of knowledge are floating stories and traditions largely picked up from hearsay, and his over-wrought mind is his only teacher.”¹⁸ This same scholar adds:

Biblical reminiscences, Rabbinic legends, Christian traditions mostly drawn from distorted apocryphal sources, and heathen native stories, all first pass through the prophet’s fervid mind, and thence issue in strange new forms, tinged with poetry and enthusiasm, and well adapted to enforce his own view of life and duty, to serve as an encouragement to his faithful

adherents, and to strike terror into the hearts of his opponents.¹⁹

The translator Rodwell acknowledges similarly:

The sources whence Muhammad derived the materials of his Koran are, over and above the more poetical parts, which are his own creation, the legends of his time and country, Jewish traditions based upon the Talmud, or perverted to suit his own purposes, and the floating Christian traditions of Arabia and of S. Syria.²⁰

It is quite clear that Muhammad borrowed in several points from the doctrines of the Ebionites, Essenes, and Sabeites.²¹

We have no **evidence** that Muhammad had access to the Christian Scriptures, though it is just possible that fragments of the Old or New Testament may have reached him... There is but one direct quotation (Sura xxi. 105) in the whole Koran from the Scriptures.²²

Muhammad obtained access to the teaching of the Apocryphal Gospels, and to many popular traditions of which those Gospels are the concrete expression.²³

The legends of Muhammad's country cannot be considered as legitimate source material. Teachings from the Jewish Talmud are not the same as what Moses taught in the Law. Much of the material in the apocryphal literature is both inane and unreliable. To count it as reliable as the inspired books of the New Testament is a grievous error. In "The Table," for example, God reminds Jesus that by His (the Father's) leave He (Jesus) created the figure of a bird out of clay and did breathe into it to make it come alive (Sura 5:110). But this alleged "sign" does not come from the New Testament, but from folklore and spurious documents such as the Gospel of Thomas.

Because Muhammad used such sources, his teaching in the Koran is inaccurate and contradicts the Bible, particularly in the area of greatest interest to Christians—Jesus Himself. Anyone who has the wrong doctrine concerning Christ has the wrong doctrine, period.

Reason #5: The Bible Is Not Confused As To The Identity Of Jesus

The Old Testament prophesies concerning the Christ Who is to come and the nature of the kingdom that He will have. He will be of the seed of woman who will defeat Satan (Gen. 3:15). Sure enough, Jesus was born of a woman, born under the Law (Gal. 4:4). This seed of Abraham would be a blessing to the entire world (Gal. 3:16). He would have a kingdom which never ends (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Dan. 2:44-45; et al.), which indicates the spiritual nature of it. Jesus fulfilled these and a few hundred other prophecies. He is the long-awaited Messiah (Isa. 52:13-53:12), the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Pages could be filled with descriptions of the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the kingdom He established (Mark 9:1; Matt. 16:18). Suffice it to say that the Bible is clear concerning the identity of Jesus. It all fits. Moses and all the prophets had written numerous things concerning the Christ (Luke 24:27).

But Muhammad is confused about the Christ. Apparently, Mary is held in high regard at this time; so he honors the teaching of the virgin birth but then also denies it. One of his Suras is titled “Mary”; it is by no means the longest, but with 98 verses it is substantial. Gabriel says that he took the form of a man and spoke with Mary:

He said: “I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy son.” She said: “How shall I have a son, when man hath never

touched me? And I am not unchaste.” He said: “So shall it be. Thy Lord hath said: ‘Easy is this with me’; and we will make him a sign to mankind, and a mercy from us. For it is a thing decreed.” And she conceived him, and retired with him to a far-off place (Sura 19:19-22).

Rodwell writes a footnote on this last verse: “It is quite clear from this passage and from verse 36, that Muhammad believed Jesus to have been conceived **by an act of the divine will**.”²⁴ Nevertheless, Muhammad could not bring himself to believe that Jesus was actually God’s Son: “It beseemeth not God to beget a son” (Sura 19:36). This is both a contradictory and confusing position to hold: Jesus exists by an act of Divine will, but God did not beget Him. The virgin birth proves the Deity of Christ, yet Muhammad holds to the former and denies the latter. He honors and reveres the Lord’s mother:

O Mary! Verily hath God chosen thee, and purified thee, and chosen thee above the women of the worlds! (Sura 3:37).

O Mary! Verily God announceth to thee the Word from Him: His name shall be, Messiah Jesus the son of Mary (Sura 3:40).

He constantly speaks of Mary in flattering terms and never suggests impurity on her part:

And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who kept her maidenhood, and into whose womb we breathed our spirit, and who believed in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was one of the devout (Sura 66:12).

If Mary was devout and did not know man, then how did Jesus get into her womb? Even if God merely **spoke** Him there (Sura 19:36), He would still be begotten of God.

Yet the Koran emphatically denies His Deity and teaches that Jesus is only a man: “Jesus is no more than a

servant whom we favoured, and proposed as an instance of divine power to the children of Israel” (Sura 43:59). In fact, anyone who would consider Jesus as more than a man is spoken of in rather harsh terms. To those who think that “God hath begotten a Son,” it is said, “No knowledge of this have either they or their fathers! A grievous saying to come out of their mouths! They speak no other than a lie” (Sura 18:3-4).

Although Muhammad takes great pains not to discredit Mary, he uses strong language to insist that no one knows that God **begot** Jesus, even going so far as to call such a person an infidel. He adds, “Had God desired to have had a son, he had surely chosen what he pleased out of his own creation” (Sura 39:5-6). The founder of the Muslim religion evidently did not consider that, if God had chosen either an angelic or a human being to be His son (someone out of His own creation), such an individual would be a contradiction in terms. He cannot be both **already** created and **spoken into existence** at the command of God. Muhammad’s thinking is quite muddled on this point; nevertheless, he vigorously opposes the Deity of Jesus:

Christians say, “The Messiah is a Son of God.”
Such the sayings in their mouths! They resemble
the sayings of the infidels of old! God do battle
with them! How are they misguided! They take
their teachers, and their monks, and the
Messiah, the son of Mary, for Lords beside God,
though bidden to worship one God only. There
is no God but He! (Sura 9:30-31).

Christians do not say that Jesus is **a** Son of God; He is **the** Son of God. We did not originate this idea. Jesus Himself first taught that fact (Mark 2:1-12). The Father also bore witness to it on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5). There is one God and one Lord (Eph. 4:4-6). The Deity of Christ is the foundation of the church (Matt. 16:16-18), and His confession of that fact was the very

reason that the Jews put Him to death (Mark 14:61-62). The Jews understood immediately that Jesus made Himself equal with God (John 5:18). Muhammad, however, did not comprehend what is so abundantly clear in the New Testament and so crucial to the Christian religion.

Muhammad decided that Christians are infidels who will burn in the fires of hell, if they maintain the Deity of Christ. The problem is that no one can actually become a Christian without confessing this fact (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10). All he wants us to do is renounce the most fundamental truth ever imparted to this world, which we cannot and will not do. Muhammad is confused about Jesus. He denies that Jesus is anything but a man—perhaps a great prophet—but definitely not the only begotten Son of God. Even that view is problematic: Jesus cannot be a prophet if He is a liar. He distinctly said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). If the founder of Islam was limited in his knowledge of Christianity (perhaps only knowing the Catholic version), his ignorance simply demonstrates that he relied on sources of the day instead of genuine inspiration.

And upon what evidence should Christians reject the Deity of Jesus (and the New Testament, which is thoroughly saturated with this teaching)? Are we to be satisfied with the assurances of a poet born half a millennium after the New Testament was written and validated? And what confirmation of his claim to be speaking for God does he provide? He gives us no miracles or evidence of any kind. Therefore, the integrity of the New Testament remains intact.

Muhammad also attacks the doctrine of the resurrection, which fact, once and for all, established all that Jesus claimed about Himself. This assault occurs in a passage in which “the prophet” is explaining why the Jews are condemned:

And for their unbelief,—and for their having spoken against Mary a grievous calumny,—And for their saying, “Verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, an Apostle of God.” Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness...they did not really slay him, but God took him up to Himself (Sura 4:155-56).

What? If the Jews did not actually crucify Jesus, then what wounds did He show to Thomas (John 20:27-28)? What are we to make of the promise of Revelation 1:7? “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him.” And what about David’s prophecy that Jesus’ body would not be left in the grave, where His flesh would see corruption (Acts 2:30-35)? That physical body was pierced (crucified), buried, and raised up from the grave. Jesus is the firstfruits of the dead (1 Cor. 15:20); He is our living hope (1 Pet. 1:3).

Muhammad has greatly erred concerning the key doctrines of Christianity. He argues both for and against the virgin birth. He denies the death of Christ on the cross for our sins, His burial, and the resurrection of Christ, all of which form the heart of the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Islam cannot deny these attested facts and be a true religion. Instead, it perpetuates the legends of Muhammad’s day and previous times, thus putting the word of men above the Word of God.

Reason #6: The Bible Teaches A Higher Morality Than The Koran

The New Testament teaches a higher morality than that of the Old, even though God instituted both systems. Under the Old Covenant, for example, murder was wrong, but now Christians must control the anger that leads to murder (Matt. 5:21-22). Likewise, adultery was one of the

Ten Commandments, but followers of Jesus must guard their hearts from lustful thoughts that might develop into adultery (Matt. 5:27-28; Matt. 15:18-20). A Pharisee might not ever commit the literal act, thus not violating the Law technically, but his heart could be full of corruption. The New Testament of Christ emphasizes attitudes as well as deeds. The fruit of the Spirit is spelled out in Galatians 5:22-23; the things that are to occupy our minds are listed in Philippians 4:8; the new garments that we are to wear are found in Colossians 3:12-15; and the Christian “graces,” as they are called, are defined in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

The reader of the Koran will find nothing akin to these lofty principles. In fact, Muhammad regresses into the unfortunate system of polygamy. Although women cannot have more than one husband, a man can marry “two, three, or four” wives (Sura 4:3). In the Bible, polygamy was practiced under the Law; in the New Covenant, Jesus authorizes only one man and one woman to be husband and wife; in heaven, people neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30). Once again, we observe a spiritual progression: several wives, one wife, no marriage at all. But the Koran returns to polygamy, and, in heaven, the faithful Muslim gets his share of beautiful virgins. The reader can judge which religion is more spiritual.

Jesus taught that “from the beginning” neither polygamy nor divorce was in the plan of God for man. Jesus said to Jews who were familiar with the Law of Moses, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female?’” (Matt. 19:4). He appealed to God’s **original** system of one woman for one man for life (Matt. 19:3-12). Rather than leading people forward with respect to religion, Muhammad led them backward. But, while others were restricted to four wives, God allowed his “prophet” as many wives as he wanted:

O Prophet! We allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, and the slaves whom thy right

hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle, and of thy maternal and paternal aunts who fled with thee to Medina, and any believing woman who hath given herself up to the Prophet, if the Prophet desired to wed her—a Privilege for thee above the rest of the Faithful (Sura 33:49).

How convenient! God favors Muhammad with perks that Elijah never dreamed of. Isaiah had to walk naked and barefoot for three years (Isa. 20:3); Jeremiah was lowered into the mire of a dungeon with ropes (Jer. 38:6); Ezekiel had to lie on his left side 390 days and on his right side 40 days (Ezek. 4:4-6). Yet Muhammad can take as wives all the women he wants. They say that timing is everything. Forget playing the guitar on the MTV to obtain an inexhaustible supply of willing women (according to the rock group, Dire Straits)—start your own religion!

Actually, however, if any area of study in the Koran and the Bible is compared, the Bible always proves to be superior. One measure of a man's teachings is the way he practices his religion. Jesus was perfect in all that He did; He lived up fully to whatever He taught others. He did not amass a great fortune; He has only one bride—the church (Eph. 5:22-23); and He conquered the hearts of men with teaching and correct reasoning, rather than with the sword. Jesus did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22).

Muhammad, however, committed at least one morally reprehensible and shameful act. According to the historian Payne:

There were perhaps other reasons for Muhammad's gentleness and benevolence at this time, among them his approaching marriage to Ayesha, the nine-year-old daughter of Abu Bakr, to whom he had been betrothed for some time.²⁵

What Muhammad termed “marriage” the rest of us would call child molestation. One wonders how he could convince his followers that such a thing was acceptable. He makes Jerry Lee Lewis look patient.²⁶ Muhammad was more than four decades older than this girl; it certainly fits in with his “earthy” reputation and his physical view of Heaven, but the world, if it had a modicum of sense, would not admire this man. His genius for poetry and sounds cannot compensate for the bloodthirsty and sensual nature he possessed. He and Joseph Smith were both motivated by a quest for power in general and control over women in particular.

Reason #7: The Bible Teaches A Higher View Of Women Than The Koran

Many feminists complain that Christianity does not treat women as equals and that it is an oppressive religion, yet the Bible consistently presents a high view of women. Consider what Moses wrote concerning the very time in which men and women were created: “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness’... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). Here are man and woman—together in the beginning. Many women are particularly touchy that man was made first; that woman led the way into sin; and that the Bible, therefore, grants men the leadership role (1 Tim. 2:8-15). But none of these things infringes on equality.

Muhammad expressed a very low view of women: “Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their substance for them” (Sura 4:38). God never gave this “revelation” to any so-called “spokesman” of His. Muhammad looked at the physical superiority of men over women and assumed

that it applied in every other area of comparison (e.g., intellect). He could not see beyond his own culture and century, which fact demonstrates that the Koran is not inspired by God: it is the product of limited, human observation. He could not imagine a society in which women are doctors, college professors, scientists, etc.

Men are allegedly superior to women in part because they provide for them, but they are also greater in terms of worth: “the men are a step above them. God is Mighty, Wise” (Sura 2:228). The Bible never errs in making this kind of misjudgment. It allows latitude for women to be educated, to have careers (like Lydia), and to pursue any legitimate endeavor. One fails to find anything in the Koran comparable to the passage describing the worthy woman (Prov. 31:10-31).

Regarding marriage, we have already seen that a woman might be one of two, three, or four wives, according to her husband’s will. Although Muhammad prescribed better treatment for wives than some surrounding cultures, women received nothing remotely akin to “equal rights.” In fact, many Muslim women are not treated very well to this day. In addition to having multiple wives, men of Islam are also allowed to “exchange one wife for another” (Sura 4:24). He does not specify a reason for divorce, but it appears to be a no-fault situation. And the man may remarry the same woman twice more, if he so desires:

But if the husband divorce her a third time, it is not lawful for him to take her again, until she shall have married another husband and if he also divorce her, then shall no blame attach to them if they return to each other, thinking that they can keep within the bounds fixed by God (Sura 4:130).

Islamic law prescribes harsh punishments for harlots. Several witnesses are needed, but a guilty woman may receive a severe or grotesque penalty:

If any of your women be guilty of whoredom, then bring four witnesses against them from yourselves; and if they bear witness to the fact, shut them up within their houses till death release them, or God make some way for them. And if two men among you commit the same crime, then punish them both; but if they turn and amend, then let them be: for God is He who turneth, Merciful! (Sura 4:19-20).

How does one obtain four witnesses to the act of prostitution? In the absence of Nikon cameras and surveillance tapes, how will four people verify the crime? It is difficult to tell in the description given above if the “two men committing the same crime” are guilty of using prostitutes or are homosexuals. In either case, men are merely punished while women are put to death. The translator Rodwell comments on this stricture concerning women in a footnote:

Women found guilty of adultery and fornication were punished at the first rise of Islam, by being literally immured. But this was exchanged, in the case of a maiden, for one year’s banishment and 100 stripes; and in the case of a married woman, for stoning.²⁷

One might agree that a temptress seducing a married man might be chastised more severely than her weak target, but men intentionally search for a prostitute. She finds “customers” because a market for her services exists. Obviously, she is not guiltless—but those who created the demand must be counted equally guilty. Yet the law only chastises men while it executes prostitutes. Muhammad decreed death for them, but in an instance when a woman guilty of marital infidelity was brought before Jesus, He gave her a second chance (John 8:1-11).

The teachings of Muhammad have born ill fruits for Muslim women. One should not just look at their teachings, but also at the way those teachings are applied in their

culture today. Fran McClure, who lived in Saudi Arabia, notes the following information concerning women:

They cannot travel freely by themselves. They are not allowed to drive a vehicle. They do not get to choose their husbands...In some Muslim countries women are not allowed any form of education at all. Look at the treatment of the Taliban against the Afghani women—where floggings for any infraction, whether real or imaginary are the norm.²⁸

She then cites Sura 4:38, which begins with “Men are superior to women,” and includes permission to scourge them. Women have a vested interest in selecting the Bible over the Koran. The Muslim holy book not only treats women as inferior, but it also contains no passage comparable to Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.” They fare poorly in marriage, in divorce, and in acts of immorality.

Reason #8: The Bible Teaches Love Rather Than Belligerence

The Muslim religion harbors a great deal of hostility towards others. The Bible is superior to the Koran because, in all respects, the New Testament teaches love and kindness. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He taught that one must love God thoroughly. The second greatest commandment involves loving one’s neighbor as oneself (Matt. 22:37-40). The list of passages that echo these sentiments is quite lengthy, but reminders of well-known facts are usually profitable.

God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to die for the sins of mankind (John 3:16), and He commends His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). In turn, we are to love Him, our

neighbors, and one another **as** He loved us (John 13:34-35; John 15:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:17). We are even to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). The Lord is the One to repay vengeance. Christians must feed a hungry enemy and give him a drink if he thirsts (Rom. 12:19-20): “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for yourselves and for all” (1 Thess. 5:15).

Kindness is also to be extended to all; it is part of the definition of love (1 Cor. 13:4) and enjoined upon Christians toward each other (Eph. 4:32). Kindness is one of the attributes that the followers of Jesus must display (Col. 3:12). In the list of characteristics Christians are to add to their faith, it falls between godliness and love (2 Pet. 1:7). Once again, as in the case of love, we are only acting the way that God does: “For He is kind to the unthankful and the evil” (Luke 6:35).

Mercy is another quality that we must possess. The “Good Samaritan” helped “a certain man,” presumably a Jew who probably despised the Samaritan race. The priest and the Levite did not help, but this “foreigner” had mercy on him (Luke 10:25-37). It requires strength of character to love those who bristle with hostility. Christians are also required to be interested in the propagation of peace. Peacemakers are blessed (Matt. 5:9). As much as lies within us, we are to be at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18). In fact, we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15). The wisdom of God is first pure, then peaceable (Jas. 3:17); anyone who seeks to advance the faith through physical battles is not following the wisdom of the Almighty, as revealed in the New Testament.

Additionally, Christians have been charged to let their light shine before others that they may see our good works and glorify the Father (Matt. 5:14-16), and with the commission to take the Gospel to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-20). The Muslim religion operates under an

entirely different (and frequently opposite) philosophy. Muhammad said:

Let not believers take infidels for their friends rather than believers; whoso shall do this hath nothing to hope from God—unless, indeed, ye fear a fear from them: But God would have you beware of Himself; for to God ye return. SAY: Whether ye hide what is in your breasts, or whether ye publish it abroad, God knoweth it: He knoweth what is in the heavens and what is in the earth: and over all things is God potent (Sura 3:27).

While the Bible commands us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), the Koran appears to prohibit even friendships with them. One wonders: “Can a Muslim be friends with non-Muslims—a Jew or a Christian?” Suppose our conclusion here is incorrect. Well, then, who fits the definition of an “infidel”? Again, Muhammad spoke, “O believers! Take not infidels for friends rather than believers. Would you furnish God with the clear right to punish you?” (Sura 4:143). We need a definition for the word “infidel”; fortunately, Muhammad disliked leaving much to chance. He spells it out for all the world to see: “O believers! take not Jews or Christians as friends” (Sura 5:56). This attitude eliminates spreading their religion through friendship, which leaves violence as the alternative.

On the other hand, Christians can become friends with Muslims. We think that they probably sincerely believe what we regard as error, but we still consider them people made in the image of God—people whose souls are valuable, people for whom Christ died. We can be friends with them, but, alas, they are forbidden to reciprocate. But worse information awaits us. Muslims not only must avoid friendships with us; they have the authority to kill us.

This Book is not other than a warning and a clear Koran, to warn whoever liveth; and, that against the Infidels sentence may be justly given (Sura 36:69-70).

And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you: but commit not the injustice of attacking them first: God loveth not such injustice. And kill them wherever ye shall find them, and eject them from whatever place they have ejected you; for civil discord is worse than carnage: yet attack them not at the sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein; but if they attack you, slay them. Such is the reward of infidels (Sura 2:186-87).

Muhammad is the apostle of God, and his comrades are vehement against the infidels, but full of tenderness among themselves (Sura 48:29).

Jesus said it best: "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:46). Islam is not a religion of love, peace, kindness, and mercy; it is a religion of revenge and aggression. Ironically and frighteningly, they believe they are doing God's will when they kill unbelievers.

When the Lord spake unto the angels, "I will be with you: therefore stablish ye the faithful. I will cast a dread into the hearts of the infidels." Strike off their heads then, and strike from them every fingertip. This, because they have opposed God and his apostle: And whoso shall oppose God and his apostle...Verily, God will be severe in punishment. "This for you! Taste it then! and for the infidels is the torture of fire! (Sura 8:12-14).

Muhammad further promised that anyone who turned his back and did not fight against the infidels would "incur the wrath of God": hell would be his dwelling place. What is interesting, however, is that Muslims not only

have authority to fight the infidels; they can kill each other as well.

If two bodies of the faithful are at war, then make ye peace between them: and if one of them wrong the other, fight against the party that doth the wrong, until they come back to the precepts of God (Sura 49:9).

One is reminded of the prophecy concerning Ishmael: "He shall be a wild man: his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand shall be against him" (Gen. 16:12). Such is the history of the nation of Islam.

Conclusion

Eight reasons have been presented for choosing the Bible over the Koran. The first is the fact that the Bible encourages study and verification of its truths; the Koran offers nothing but threats for failing to accept it. The second one goes to the heart of the issue. Although both books claim inspiration, only the Bible offers compelling evidence to support its claim. The third involves the Bible being free of contradictions against much greater odds than a document composed by only one individual. Even so, despite the best efforts of Muslims to maintain the unity of the Koran, the general public is aware of the "Satanic Verses," an embarrassment not associated with the true Word of God. Neither did the writers of the Bible (the fourth reason) use questionable or erroneous sources of information, such as the current thinking and attitudes of the day. Muhammad did.

Fifth, the Bible proclaims unashamedly the Deity of Christ, as foretold and fulfilled. Muhammad venerates Mary and believes that God spoke Jesus into her womb, but then argues that He is not begotten of God and not a member of the Godhead. Anyone who is wrong about Jesus

is wrong, period. Our Lord is eternal; He will even judge Muhammad (John 12:48). Sixth, the Bible preaches a higher morality than the Koran, as the evidence showed. Seventh, the Koran regards women as inferior beings, a notion against which both sexes ought to rebel. Finally, the operating philosophy of love, compassion, mercy, kindness, and peace is promoted in Christianity but missing in Islam.

Those who have been reared as Muslims may not know that there is a better book and a better way of life awaiting them in Christ. They would do themselves a great favor by reading and meditating on the New Testament. It may be that Muslims have observed versions of Christianity that are not reliable representations of its teachings. Like the Bereans, they need to search the Scriptures daily to see how God designed the religion. It is better and more spiritual in every respect. Furthermore, it is only Jesus Who can save people from their sins (Matt. 1:21; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Endnotes

1 All Scripture citations are from the New King James unless otherwise specified.

2 Fran McClure, "From The Women's Quarters," **Islam—From God Or Man?**, ed. David Brown (Spring, TX: Contending for the Faith, 2003), p. 587.

3 Ibid, p. 588.

4 Ibid, p. 589.

5 All quotes from the Koran are from the version translated by J. M. Rodwell (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1909). Although the Suras are all numbered uniformly, variations exist between the verse divisions, depending on the translation.

6 Robert Payne, **The History Of Islam** (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), pp. 34-35.

7 Ibid, pp. 136-37.

8 David Jones, "Muhammadanism," **Dangerous 'Isms**, ed. B. J. Clarke (Southaven, MS: Southaven church of Christ, 1997), p. 338.

9 Rodwell, p. 406.

10 Payne, p. 13.

- 11 Much of the material in this chapter comes from Gary Summers, "An Overview of the Koran," **Islam—From God Or Man?**, ed. David Brown (Spring, TX: Contending for the Faith, 2003), pp. 158-207.
- 12 Ibid, p. 161.
- 13 Samuel Green, "Muhammad and the Satanic Verses," <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Green/satanic.htm>.
- 14 Dr. Ernest Hahn, "The Satanic Verses", <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Hahn/satanicverses.htm>.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Rodwell, p. 70.
- 17 Green.
- 18 G. Margoliouth, "Introduction," **The Koran**, trans. J. M. Rodwell (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1909), pp. ix-x.
- 19 Ibid, p. viii.
- 20 Rodwell, p. 8.
- 21 Ibid, p. 10.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid, p. 8.
- 24 Rodwell, p. 119.
- 25 Payne, p. 31.
- 26 This rock singer married his cousin when she was only 13; it was his second marriage.
- 27 Ibid, p. 413.
- 28 Fran McClure, "Through the Lattice," **Islam—From God Or Man?**, ed. David Brown (Spring, TX: Contending for the Faith, 2003), p. 582.

CHAPTER 21

Over The Da Vinci Code

Kevin V. Rutherford

Introduction

ON THE COVER OF **The Da Vinci Code** by Dan Brown are the words “a novel.” **The Da Vinci Code** is essentially a mystery novel. A murder has been committed, and the hero of the book has been falsely accused. Now, this fictional hero and scholar, “Robert Langdon,” must run to save his life while trying hard to solve a mystery that goes far beyond a murder.

Why would one spend time in refuting a mystery novel? Does everyone not realize that it is a work of fiction? What is in the book that has caused so much of an uproar? The primary reason to refute this book is that some very serious attacks against Christianity are found within its pages. The fictional characters of the book reveal “facts” which are supposed to present “evidence that the New Testament is false testimony.”¹ While the story is fictional, the author says at the beginning of his novel, “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.”² Dan Brown is clearly attempting to spread his view of world history and world religion through the medium of an exciting novel.

Dan Brown’s book elevates paganism, attacks Christianity, perverts history, distorts the facts, and promotes sexual immorality. This is all very appealing in a world culture that is turning rapidly away from true Christianity and denominational “Christianity.” Dan

Brown's **The Da Vinci Code** encourages this cultural shifting by painting Christianity as oppressive and evil, while suggesting that the reasonable and rational alternative is paganism.

Some have naively suggested that a novel cannot have much influence: "Surely people will recognize this as a work of fiction and not accept the distortions of reality found within." The problem is that people are accepting this novel as an accurate portrayal of reality. This book is having a tremendous impact upon people. Those who have opposed Christianity have found "new" ammunition to use against unsuspecting Christians. Those Christians who have not been grounded with the true facts about their faith are finding themselves beginning to doubt all they have ever believed about the Bible, Jesus, and God the Father.

At the time of this writing, **The Da Vinci Code** has been on the **New York Times** Best-Seller List for more than two years and has sold over 7 million copies. TV specials have addressed the issues raised in the book, and a movie directed by Ron Howard is in the works. In addition, travel agents are now designing tours that take fans to many of the historical sites visited by the heroes of the book. The influence of this pagan-promoting propaganda is immense. For this reason, members of the church of Christ need to arm themselves with research and information that inoculate them against this evil and that enables them to answer friends, co-workers, and family members who may question them about Dan Brown's bestselling novel, **The Da Vinci Code**.

Da Vinci Code Distortion #1: Jesus Was Married

As we will clearly demonstrate later, Dan Brown is promoting a paganism that emphasizes women over men. It is a paganism of goddess worship and female spiritual

leadership. Dan Brown refers to his view of female-led paganism as “the sacred feminine.” This statement is found in numerous places throughout the book. In fact, a statement found in the “Acknowledgements” of the book refers to **The Da Vinci Code** as “a novel drawn so heavily on the sacred feminine.”

As a part of his plot to promote the sacred feminine, Mr. Brown suggests that the Holy Grail is Mary Magdalene, that she was married to Jesus, and that she had a child with Jesus.³ One of the lead characters in this novel says, “it was not Peter to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the Christian Church. It was **Mary Magdalene**.”⁴ Mary, a woman, was to establish the church. This is interesting, since Jesus said in the Scriptures that He would establish the church (Matt. 16:18). Why Mary? She is a woman, and the book wants us to believe that, prior to A.D. 325, pagan, female-led goddess worship dominated the worship of mankind.⁵

Was Jesus married? First of all, the Bible itself does not tell us that He was married. Second, history has no proof that Jesus was married. Dan Brown disagrees. He believes there is evidence that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. As evidence, he quotes from some of the Gnostic Gospels. These are books that the early church rejected. They did not pass the tests applied to books to determine if a book belonged in the Bible. We will deal with this more when we address Dan Brown’s specific attacks against the Bible. Suffice it to say for now that early Christians such as Eusebius clearly recognized that the Gnostic Gospels were not from God. Concerning these writings, he said:

[T]he type of phraseology differs from apostolic style, and the opinion and tendency of their contents is widely dissonant from true orthodoxy and clearly shows that they are forgeries of heretics.⁶

The **Gospel Of Thomas** and the **Gospel Of Philip** are both mentioned in **The Da Vinci Code** as books that allude to the marriage status of Christ. Even in these radical books that were rejected by the early church, there is no direct statement that Jesus Christ was a married man. But should those books even be considered as credible evidence? Eusebius calls them “forgeries of heretics” and, concerning these “gospels,” F. W. Mattox writes:

Occasionally references are made to “New Testament” books not now in use but it should be understood that all such references are to those “apocryphal” books which were rejected with good cause by the early churches.⁷

Apparently, desperate for real evidence to back up his foolish theory, Dan Brown suggests that Leonardo Da Vinci also believed that the Holy Grail was Mary Magdalene, and that she was married to Jesus. As evidence, Dan Brown reveals through the story some clues in Da Vinci’s famous painting entitled **The Last Supper**.⁸ The major clue to Da Vinci’s view is the feminine character standing next to Jesus. While most accept this as a feminine painting of John, Brown says that it is actually a picture of Mary. Brown indicates that Da Vinci was trying to tell us something. He was trying to tell us that Jesus was married to Mary.⁹ Thrusting this Holy Grail theory into Da Vinci’s painting of the last supper requires a lot of imagination. While I would agree that the figure to which he refers in the painting is rather feminine, that does not prove Da Vinci did not intend to paint John in a feminine way, nor does it prove that Da Vinci believed in Dan Brown’s Holy Grail theory.

This is more than just grasping at straws. This is a desperate attempt to prove an hypothesis for which there is no proof. Let us suppose for a moment that **The Da Vinci Code** is correct in suggesting that Leonardo believed

that Jesus was married to Mary. What would that prove? Da Vinci's views on life do not prove them to be fact. Just because someone says something is true does not mean that it is. Just because a famous artist believed something does not mean he had a shred of evidence to back it up. In other words, there is nothing in all of this that even closely resembles an historical fact. However, all of this does leave us with this clear conclusion. There is no evidence whatsoever that Jesus was ever married. The facts about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the "Holy Grail" will not support Brown's view of the "sacred feminine."

Da Vinci Code Distortion #2: The Bible Is Not From God

To further promote his pagan thesis of the "sacred feminine," author Dan Brown has one of his characters attack the integrity of the Scriptures. He says, "The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds."¹⁰ The fictional scholar (Teabing) in Brown's story goes on to explain, "The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great."¹¹ This is supposedly part of a plot that Constantine hatched to come up with a Bible that would destroy pure paganism and bring about what instead would be "a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties."¹²

In addition, it is suggested that Constantine had to come up with this new Bible to convince people of the Deity of Jesus. Brown tells us that Constantine and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) established the doctrine of Jesus' Divinity. Dan Brown writes, "until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a **man** nonetheless." In order to establish this doctrine:

Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of

Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.¹³

To address this accusation against the integrity of the Scriptures, we need to talk briefly about how we got the sixty-six books of the Bible. The sixty-six books of the Bible are referred to as the "Canon." Canon is from the Greek word for "a measuring rod, a rule, or a standard."¹⁴ There are many books outside the accepted canon which were written about the same time and yet which have been rejected. Why were these rejected and the 66 included? The answer is relatively simple. Men needed to examine each of these books in order to determine which books were inspired by God. To do this they applied certain tests to each book. Those tests included questions such as the following. Was the book written by a spokesman for God (apostle or prophet)? Was the writer confirmed by miracles? Did the message tell the truth about God as compared to previous revelations? Does the book have the edifying power of a book from God? Was it accepted by the people of God to whom it was addressed?¹⁵ When these tests are applied, only 66 books pass. These are the 66 books that make up the canon. These are the 66 books of the Bible.

The Old Testament Canon "was completed no later than the second century B.C. and possibly as early as the fourth century B.C."¹⁶ But what about the New Testament Canon? Brown's book suggests that it was not "collated" until the time of Constantine. Norman Geisler (Ph.D., Loyola University) and William E. Nix (Ph.D., University of Oklahoma) write:

Although the church did not give official recognition to the canon prior to the late fourth century, it is misleading to say there was no

recognition before then. As with the Old Testament books, there is ample evidence available to confirm that the inspired books were received immediately as such, circulated, and even collected.¹⁷

As proof that the 27 books of the New Testament were already considered canonical (from God and belonging in the Bible) consider The Old Syriac translation that came from a text dating to the second century. It included all of the 27 books long before Constantine ever came along.¹⁸ Constantine and the Council of Nicea (325 A. D.) were not making their own Bible, or suddenly deciding which books belonged in the Bible. They were simply recognizing what Christians had already determined. The 27 belonged in the canon (or the Bible), and all others should be rejected.

Having spoken briefly of how these books became the New Testament from the standpoint of church recognition, let me take a moment to emphasize the ultimate source of these books. The church did not give us the 27 books of the New Testament. Many times Catholics will boast that the Roman Catholic church gave the world the Bible. Nothing could be further from the truth:

Canonicity is determined by God. A book is not inspired because men made it canonical; it is canonical because God inspired it. It is not the antiquity, authenticity, or religious community that makes a book canonical or authoritative.¹⁹

God determined which books went into the Bible when He inspired those books (John 14:26; John 16:13; Heb. 2:3-4; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Men only had to recognize which books were inspired and to separate them from all uninspired writings of the time.

Another salvo lobbed against the Scriptures in **The Da Vinci Code** is the suggestion that the Bible must have

been corrupted in the time that has passed since the original manuscripts were written. One of Dan Brown's characters says the Bible "has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book."²⁰ In other words, Brown is suggesting there is no way the Bible we have today can resemble the original manuscripts after so much time has passed.

The Bible can be and has been accurately transferred from one generation to another. The Bible itself promised as much (1 Pet. 1:23-25), but can it be proven? The answer is yes. We can prove the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament by examining the thousands of manuscripts that exist and by comparing these to the Greek translation of the Scriptures called The Septuagint. We can also cross-reference those copies of the Old Testament Scriptures with the Dead Sea Scrolls. When we do so, we find that these manuscripts and documents, though separated by centuries, are remarkably united. In other words, they were transferred accurately down through the centuries.

Now, how about the New Testament? Can we be sure of its accurate transmission through time? Yes! Let us compare the New Testament to other ancient documents. We have 5,366 New Testament manuscripts that have survived from the second century and later: "By contrast, most other books from the ancient world survive in only a few and late manuscript copies."²¹ Surely, this is evidence that God is preserving His Word as He promised. Also, consider another evidence of accurate transmission:

A few of the New Testament manuscript fragments are very early, dating from the second century. By contrast, the manuscripts for most other ancient books date from about a thousand years after their original composition.²²

The vast number of New Testament manuscripts preserved and the close proximity with which they come to the actual time of the originals attest to the amazing preservation of these books.

In addition, we can check the accuracy of the transmission of the New Testament books by comparing them to the uninspired writings of early Christians. These early Christians are sometimes referred to as “the church fathers.” In the letters they wrote to fellow Christians, we have 36,289 quotations of New Testament Scripture.²³ The letters of these early Christians date from the first century through the fourth century.

All of this evidence will lead the honest person to come to some powerful conclusions concerning the Bible. For example, Geisler and Nix wrote:

No book from antiquity comes to the modern world with greater evidence for its authenticity than does the Bible. Both the kind and the amount of evidence that supports the fidelity of the present critical text are greater than for any other book from the ancient world.²⁴

Sir Frederic Kenyon said:

The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.²⁵

The accurate transmission of the Scriptures is evidence that the Bible is a book like no other.

The Da Vinci Code also takes a stab at the historical accuracy of the Bible. Brown’s book says that historians cannot “confirm the authenticity of the Bible.”²⁶ In answering Brown’s ignorant assertion, let us look at some quotes from archaeologists and historians. William F. Albright said, “There can be no doubt that archaeology

has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.”²⁷ Nelson Glueck wrote:

It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.²⁸

Quotations such as these and the historical and archaeological evidence that leads to such statements could fill volumes. We must conclude from the evidence that the Bible is historically accurate.

There are so many other evidences of the accuracy of the Bible, and so many other ways we could prove that the Bible is from God. However, we do not have time to address all the evidence. Evidence comes from the accurate prophecies of the Bible, and evidence comes from the Bible’s indestructibility, despite the attempts by many to wipe it off the planet. More evidence comes from the unity of the Bible itself. There is one theme in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, despite the fact that the Bible is made up of 66 different books, written by over 40 different men (inspired men), over a period of 1500-1600 years. This, in and of itself, is evidence that a Being capable of living at least 1500 years was overseeing the project. Clearly, Dan Brown makes a big mistake when he indicates that the Bible is from man and not from God.

Da Vinci Code Distortion #3:

The Gnostic Gospels Picture The True Christ

The character Sir Teabing tells us “More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion.”²⁹ Those excluded are referred to as the Gnostic Gospels, and there were not eighty of them.³⁰ **The Da Vinci Code** tries to

get us to believe that these rejected gospels tell us the true nature of Jesus. According to Brown, that true nature was human only and not Divine. In addition, we are to believe that the Gnostic Gospels represent the true belief of early Christians. Furthermore, it is stated that the belief that Jesus was Divine was not established until Constantine and the Council of Nicea came up with it in A.D. 325. We have already addressed to some degree the validity of the Gnostic Gospels. The early church did not accept them. Referring to these blasphemous books, Drs. Geisler and Nix say:

During the first few centuries, numerous books of a fanciful and heretical nature arose that are neither genuine nor valuable as a whole. Eusebius of Caesarea called these “totally absurd and impious.” Virtually no orthodox Father, canon, or council considered these books to be canonical and, so far as the church is concerned, they are primarily of historical value. These books indicate the heretical teaching of gnostic, docetic, and ascetic groups, as well as the exaggerated fancy of religious lore in the early church. At best, these books were revered by some of the cults and referred to by some of the orthodox Fathers, but they were never considered canonical by the mainstream of Christianity.³¹

The ludicrous nature of these books can be seen in just a few examples. The **Gospel Of Thomas** paints Jesus as a vindictive little boy with great power. He becomes angry with one boy and causes the boy to wither up (Thomas 3:2-3).³² This same rejected book shows us a Jesus who, when bumped into by another little boy, immediately causes the boy to fall down and die.³³ The **Gospel Of The Ebionites** denies the Deity of Christ and promotes the belief that eating meat is wrong.³⁴ The **Gospel Of Peter** teaches that Jesus felt no pain when He died on the cross.

Many other examples could be given to show that these books are foolish in nature and do not fit in with the plain Bible teaching of books accepted as inspired long before these books ever came along.

Furthermore, it becomes very clear that the early writings of Paul clearly teach the Deity of Christ. This view is in direct conflict with some of the Gnostic Gospels as well as with Dan Brown's belief that the Deity of Christ was not established until the days of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Paul taught that Jesus was the Son of God and, as such, did possess the nature of Deity (Rom. 1:1-4). Paul also made it very clear that Jesus is the member of the Godhead Who created this world (Col. 1:16-17). All that Paul wrote came before A.D. 63/64, when he was beheaded at the command of Emperor Nero. This is much earlier than those books that denied the Deity of Christ. This proves that the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus existed long before Constantine and even before the Gnostic Gospels.

The writings of John clearly address the errors of the Gnostics. His Gospel account emphasizes very strongly the Deity of Christ, which the Gnostics rejected. Consider John 1:1-14 and John 8:58 as but two of many passages in the Gospel of John which refute the Gnostic heresy. John's epistles address the Gnostic error by emphasizing those things that we do know (1 John 1:1-4), and by referring to the Gnostics as "antichrist" (1 John 2:18; 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). Clearly, the early church rejected the false claims of the Gnostics and their Gnostic Gospels. In addition, we cannot doubt the fact that the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus existed prior to the Council of Nicea.

While on the subject of the Council of Nicea, let us address for a moment the vote mentioned in Dan Brown's book. **The Da Vinci Code** says that the vote on whether

to include the Deity of Christ in its statement of doctrine was a close one. Brown suggests that the notion that Jesus was Divine barely passed by a council vote. First of all, such councils do not determine the truth of the matter. God's Word does. But, even beyond this, Mr. Brown once again shows a great disregard for truth and fact. The vote was not a close vote. The council voted 316 to 2 in favor of including a statement affirming the Deity of Christ.³⁵ We also need to understand, as has already been pointed out, that the early church already believed in the Deity of Christ. The Council of Nicea and Constantine were only reaffirming what was already believed. Dan Brown could not be more wrong when he asserts that Constantine and the council came up with the doctrine of Christ's Divinity.

Let us give one more evidence of the early churches' belief in the Deity of Christ. We can look to early, uninspired writings of Christians to see that they believed in the Deity of Christ decades and even centuries before the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine. In their book, **Cracking The Da Vinci Code**, James Garlow (Ph.D., Drew University) and Peter Jones (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) list the following quotes from early Christians:

Ignatius: God Himself was manifested in human form (A.D. 105).

Justin Martyr: The Father of the universe has a Son. And He...is even God (A.D. 160).

Irenaeus: He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this (A.D. 180).

Tertullian: Christ our God (A.D. 200).

Origen: No one should be offended that the Savior is also God (A.D. 225).

Novation: He is not only man, but God also (A.D. 235).

Cyprian: Jesus Christ, our Lord and God (A.D. 250).

Many of the Gnostic Gospels do in fact attack the Divinity of Jesus and make Him no more than a man. The

idea that those gospels represent the true thinking of early Christians is absolutely false. There is no evidence to support the view that followers of Jesus believed Him human (only) until after A.D. 325. Dan Brown is wrong. The Gnostic Gospels do not portray the true Jesus Christ.

Da Vinci Code Distortion #4: Paganism Is A Better Way

That **The Da Vinci Code** promotes paganism and attacks Christianity is a fact that cannot be denied. The hero of the story, Robert Langdon, is working on a manuscript “about the iconography of goddess-worship the concept of female sanctity and the art and symbols associated with it.”³⁷ The murdered curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris is pictured as a wonderful person who died as a martyr for the cause of paganism. It is said of this character that he had a “personal passion for relics relating to fertility, goddess cults, Wicca, and the sacred feminine.”³⁸ In fact, the thesis of the book might be summed up in the following statement by one of the major characters:

The Priory believes that Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever.³⁹

There are at least two issues that ought to be examined in regard to Mr. Brown’s view of paganism. First of all, **The Da Vinci Code** suggests that paganism and goddess worship elevated women while Christianity brought women down.

To support his contention, Brown uses the Roman Catholic church as an example of chauvinistic behavior.

Concerning the Catholic group *Opus Dei*, it is said, “their views on women were medieval at best.”⁴⁰ The author of **The Da Vinci Code** also cites the Roman Catholic persecution of “free thinking women.”⁴¹ Allegedly, these “free-thinking” women were cast as witches who were to be tortured and killed. Among those “free thinking” women, Dan Brown includes “female scholars...nature lovers, herb gatherers, and any women ‘especially attuned to the natural world.’”⁴²

While the validity of many of Dan Brown’s claims concerning the Catholic church are suspect, we fully recognize the historical fact that the Roman Catholic church has been guilty of some very un-Christian behavior in the past. One has but to consider the crusades and the inquisition to know this to be true. However, a clear distinction should be made between Roman Catholicism and true Christianity. True Christianity is that which follows the New Testament pattern and which rejects all other standards of authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Roman Catholicism is a perversion and a corruption of the real thing. One has but to compare the doctrines and practices of Catholicism with New Testament Christian practice to know this to be true. Consequently, we conclude that any attacks made against the Roman Catholic Church are not attacks against true Christianity.

True Christianity elevated women to a level they had not known before Christ. For example, it is the New Testament which says, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). In essence, God has said that He will not even listen to a man’s prayers if that man does not treat his wife respectfully. In addition, the Bible teaches husbands to love their wives so much that they would be willing to die for them, and to love their wives as they do their own bodies (Eph. 5:25-33).

Granted, the Bible gives man the spiritual headship of the home (Eph. 5:22), but different roles do not equate to greater value in the eyes of God. To illustrate this point, we will look at Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." God the Father has authority over the Son. Does this make the Son any less valuable? Does this make His role of lesser importance? What about the authority the husband has over the wife? Does this make him any more valuable to God than her? Absolutely not! Is he of more value in the home than she? No! By giving men and women different roles God did not indicate one was of greater value than the other. The pilot of an F-18 is no more valuable than the crew chief of that airplane. Without the crew chief the pilot cannot fly. Without the wife, the home is crippled significantly.

The same is true with regard to the church. While the Bible does give man the spiritual headship of the church (1 Tim. 2-3), the woman is considered of equal value in the church (Gal. 3:26-29). Man has a role, and the woman has a role. Both roles are vital. True Christianity has elevated women by teaching that they are of equal value with men.

Christianity has also elevated women from being viewed as property and sex objects to being viewed as valued human beings whom God loves. The Bible encourages Christians to control themselves sexually (Gal. 5:19-23). The lust and lewdness of the pagans are replaced by love and self-discipline in true Christianity (Gal. 5:22-23). The New Testament provides for a lifelong, loving, and nourishing relationship to be the basis for any sexual activity between men and women (Heb. 13:4). That committed and protective relationship is called "marriage." Sex outside of this pure institution is not only dirty, but is

dangerous. How many women have been hurt physically, emotionally, and spiritually by men who simply want to use them for their bodies?

Further evidence of the Bible's goal to elevate women above sex objects is found in the following statement made by Jesus Christ Himself: "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Jesus does not want His followers to view women as physical toys for the foolish and irresponsible fantasies of lustful men. Mr. Brown's book suggests the early church "worked hard to demonize sex and recast it as a disgusting and sinful act."⁴³ He has not read the Bible that he attacks. The Bible pictures sex as a pure and wonderful relationship designed for both the procreation and the pleasure of man, but only when that relationship exists in the stable and loving environment of marriage (Heb. 13:4).

On the other hand, pagans belittle women by making them little more than sex objects to be lusted after. Paganism encourages fornication and adultery. **The Da Vinci Code** speaks of a sexual rite that the murdered curator had participated in. Men and women moved around a circle while the curator had intercourse with a woman in the middle of that circle. The granddaughter of the curator sees this act and flees. She breaks off her relationship with him in disgust. Later, she is told, "What you saw was not about sex, it was about spirituality. The Hieros Gamos ritual is not a perversion. It's a deeply sacrosanct ceremony."⁴⁴

The book also teaches that men may communicate with Deity and "achieve *gnosis*—knowledge of the Divine" through the physical union with women.⁴⁵ The hero of the story tells the male college students in his class:

The next time you find yourself with a woman, look in your heart and see if you cannot approach sex as a mystical, spiritual act. Challenge

yourself to find that spark of divinity that man can only achieve through sexual union with the sacred feminine.⁴⁶

Free sex is promoted by suggesting it is something spiritual or religious. We could sum up Robert Langdon's teaching in this way: "You college boys have physical unions with women all you want as long as you remember it is something spiritual." This simply gives men one more opportunity to view women as little more than objects for their personal pleasure. This does not elevate women!

When we look at the pagan practices of the ancients, we realize that paganism does not elevate women. While it is true that some pagans worshiped female deities, it is also true that their worship of such goddesses was very perverse and belittling to women. For example, it is a well-established historical fact:

[T]he ancients had a temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty (Roman equivalent, Venus), which was populated with over 1,000 prostitutes whose services were used in "worship."⁴⁷

Tell me how women can elevate themselves by selling their bodies in a religious act of "worship"! Paganism is the true enemy of women's rights. Christianity is the true champion of women's real rights. Dan Brown could not have missed the mark any further!

A second issue to be raised in view of **The Da Vinci Code's** promotion of paganism over Christianity centers around what Dan Brown refers to as a "life out of balance."⁴⁸ Brown's distorted view suggests that paganism, and goddess worship in particular, helped to balance life out. The idea he promotes is that Constantine and the Catholic church put women down, thereby throwing the world out of balance. He then says this has resulted in wars and "disrespect for Mother Earth."⁴⁹ This is a total distortion of truth. Did the world not have any wars before

the 4th century A.D.? Was there no violence in existence prior to the reign of Constantine? Was there no war between Babylon and the Medes and Persians? Are all the things we know about Alexander the Great's Macedonian army and the violent way in which it conquered the Persians false? **No!** Of course, these facts are not false. The reality is that Dan Brown's premise is simply foolish and ridiculous.

Not only does Mr. Brown ignore historical fact in suggesting that the world was better off under paganism, but he once again shows his failure to understand true Christianity. True New Testament Christianity does not call for violence. Our battle and our weapons are spiritual (Eph. 6:10-20). Our message is one of love (Eph. 4:15). Our Gospel is one of hope (Rom. 1:16). True Christianity will not throw the world out of balance and thrust it into violence. True Christianity, if applied, would have the very opposite effect.

Conclusion

The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown is an outright attempt to turn people away from Christianity and toward paganism. In so doing, Dan Brown belittles the Christ, the Bible, and Christians. Also, Dan Brown's propaganda promotes the practice of fornication as long as it is in the name of worshiping "the divine feminine." His message is resonating in the hearts of the perverse and creating shockwaves among those who once trusted the Bible. It is a bitter, immoral, and dangerous message, but it is not new. His attacks simply involve old lies thrown into a modern package.

Does Dan Brown really believe these things, or is he simply writing fiction for us to accept as nothing more than entertainment? When interviewed on ABC's **20/20**, Dan Brown said:

I began as a skeptic. As I started researching **The Da Vinci Code** I really thought I would disprove a lot of this theory about Mary Magdalene and holy blood and all of that. I became a believer.⁵⁰

Dan Brown actually believes in the fictional fantasies of his bestselling novel. James spoke of some who deceive their own hearts (Jas. 1:26). Apparently, Dan Brown has deceived himself with his own distortions and lies. How sad it is that many others are also being deceived by this book! ABC's Elizabeth Vargas said, "Some of the claims the book makes are not credible."⁵¹ When all of the facts are in, it becomes very clear that **most** of the claims the book makes are not credible.

The true church of Christ will not sit idly by and let the pagans blaspheme God. We will put on our spiritual armor and go into spiritual battle against all forces of evil. We will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11). Remember David's reaction to the blasphemy of the pagan giant Goliath? David said, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26). David then proceeded to slay the giant. When paganism blasphemes God, the armies of God must arise to defend the cause. We rise to the spiritual challenge to fight a very real, spiritual battle. It is the age-old battle of paganism versus Christianity.

Let me pose a few questions before we close. Who shall win this battle for the minds of men and women? Will paganism eventually triumph over Christianity, or will the opposite be true? Is this the "Age of Aquarius," in which paganism makes its comeback and Christianity suffers a bitter end? While we must admit that paganism is growing in strength, we also realize that, ultimately and finally, God is in control. God will win. Truth will survive. Paganism will go down to hell with its satanic creator. Whose side are you on?

Endnotes

- 1 Dan Brown, **The Da Vinci Code** (New York: Doubleday, 2003), p. 341.
- 2 Ibid, p. 1.
- 3 Ibid, p. 235.
- 4 Ibid, p. 248.
- 5 Ibid, p. 232.
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CHAPTER 22

What The Psalmist Believed About The Bible: Psalm 119

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Introduction

GENUINE GRATITUDE IS EXPRESSED to B. J. Clarke, Wayne Jones, the elders, and all the Southaven congregation for the treasured invitation to speak on this lectureship and pen a chapter for the book. This is one of the premiere lectureships conducted among us. It continues to be on the cutting edge, which we all appreciate.

Psalm 119 is brilliant, bold, beautiful, and breathtaking. Its uniqueness is intently impressive. (1) It is the longest chapter in Sacred Scripture—176 verses. (2) It is divided into 22 divisions with eight verses in each stately section. (3) Each division is begun with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet such as *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, He, Vau*, etc. Each verse in each division is begun with that same letter. The Hebrew alphabet had 22 letters. (4) This chapter exalts and extols the Bible. Tribute after tribute is laid on each other, as though each verse sought to outdo the previous verses in excelling the virtues of God's worthy and wonderful Word. It is no overstatement to say that Psalm 119 is a chapter about the Bible. Great indeed would be our literary loss had it not been penned

with literary excellence and preserved with God's providence.

About Authorship

We have no beginning ascription as touching human authorship. To me it breathes Davidic sentiment throughout. Obviously, the Holy Spirit is the heavenly author. But we can know for a surety who did not write this chapter. (1) It was not penned by an atheist, infidel or agnostic such as is portrayed in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1. "Fool" there is derived from *nabal*, which means empty—empty of head, heart, and hand. Yet empty-headed, empty-hearted, and empty-handed professors are teaching our youth all across this country. (2) The devil or one of his disciples did not pen it. (3) It was not penned by a God-hater or a Bible-basher. (4) It was not penned by one who disdained truth and held it in contempt. (5) It was not penned by an antinomian—one opposed to law and obedience to it. (6) It was not written by a flesh-loving prodigal who pursued and practiced worldly lusts. (7) It was not written by one who deemed the Word of God to be a dead letter and utterly void of quickening or living power. (8) It was not written by one who thought one can prove anything and everything by the Bible. (9) It was not written by one who contended that there had to be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon each saint's heart before there could be understanding and perception. (10) It was not penned by one who deemed the Bible to be of little value or worth. (11) It was not written by one who deemed the Bible to be filled with myths, legends, contradictions, jarring disharmonies, and unbelievable folklore. (12) It was not written by one who looked on God's Word as obsolete, archaic or out-of-date for men of his time. The writer of Psalm 119 was the very antithesis of all the foregoing.

About Its Memorization

Many years ago, I heard the late and lamented J. Roy Vaughn, news editor and later editor of the **Gospel Advocate**, make mention of a memorization plan adopted by the brilliant Hall L. Calhoun, who possessed a Ph.D. from prestigious Harvard University. At regular intervals, brother Calhoun memorized Psalm 119. He did it for the mental exercise and the spiritual profit it bequeathed him so beautifully. To me this was an idea whose time had come. For the last 35 years or more I have taken the first 22 days in February and pursued this memorization path with eight verses per day. As I write this, February 21, 2005, I am ready for the 21st section (*Schin*). It is a rich and rewarding annual delight to make this memory journey. I commend it to each reader of this chapter. I have to go over and over memorized passages from time to time to keep them fresh in mind. Perhaps you do also.

An Impossible Task

There is no way justice can be done to this comprehensive chapter in some 12 to 15 pages allotted. Very soon I hope to publish an entire book on just this chapter. I have most of it already in longhand. Even then only the hem of this literary garment is touched. The chapter is inexhaustible and beyond human ability to plumb its comprehensive coverage of tributes to God's worthy and wonderful Word.

A Variety Of Terms Used To Refer To God's Word

(1) We have **testimonies** (derived from *edoth*) and defined as "beyond, farther, all along, testimony." They are solemnly declared to all. Psalm 119:2 is an example.

(2) We have **commandments** (derived from *mitzvoth*) meaning "to command, order, ordain." They are

both positive and negative in nature. Psalm 119:172 is an example.

(3) We have **precepts** (derived from *pikkudim*) and defined as “to take notice or care of a thing, to attend, have respect to, to appoint, to visit.” These are God’s rules prescribed to us. Psalm 119:104 is an example.

(4) We have **word** (derived from *dahar*) meaning “to discourse, utter one’s sentiments, speak consecutively and intelligently.” Seemingly, it is the favorite term among Biblical penmen to refer to Divine revelation. Psalm 119:89 is an example.

(5) We have **law** (derived from *torah*) meaning to “direct, guide, teach, make straight, or even to point forward.” Law shows us what is right and wrong. Psalm 119:142 is an example.

(6) We have **way** (derived from *derech*) meaning “to proceed, go in, walk, tread.” Herein we have God’s providence and our obedient response. Psalm 119:30 is an example.

(7) We have **truth** (derived from *emunah*) meaning “to make steady, constant, to settle, trust, and believe.” The Bible said it; that settles it; I believe it, which says it well and scripturally. His Word is truth, and He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18; Tit. 1:2). Psalm 119:151 is an example.

(8) We have **judgments** (derived from *mishpatim*) meaning “to judge, determine, regulate, order, discern.” God’s Word enables us to judge between right and wrong, and by it we one day shall be judged (John 12:48). Psalm 119:75 is an example.

(9) We have **righteousness** (derived from *tsedakah*) meaning “to do justice, to give full weight.” His word is the sole standard determining right and wrong. Psalm 119:172 is an example.

(10) We have **statutes** (derived from *chukkim*) meaning “to mark, trace out, describe, ordain.” God’s Word

marks out our way of travel, traces out our life's direction, describes the manner of life to be lived, and ordains or appoints the charges obligatory to be kept. Psalm 119:117 is an example.

The foregoing definitions have been taken from the writings of Adam Clarke and Matthew Henry.

This variety of terms employed says much about how the Psalmist treated the Bible and what he believed about it. His attitude is the very antithesis of how most religionists today treat the Bible—God's Holy Word.

He Believed In Blessed Assurance: A Beautiful Beginning

Psalm 1:1 opens beautifully with the precious word "Blessed." So does Psalm 128:1. The Sermon on the Mount opens with repeated usage of the word "Blessed" (Matt. 5:3-11). Seven beautiful beatitudes grace the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:3; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 19:9; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:14). The opening two verses of Psalm 119 likewise begin with this term of marvel and majesty. They read, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Psm. 119:1-2). The undefiled traveler in the way walks in the Lord's law. There is no other way to be undefiled. The walker in verse 1 is the keeper of Heaven's testimonies in verse 2. The walker and keeper seek God with wholeness of heart—with all the intellect, the emotions, the willpower and the conscience. These are the components of the Biblical heart or man's mind. Purity of heart in Matthew 5:8 is purity of mind by way of perception. The blessed man does right and refuses to do wrong. Right actions begin with right thoughts, motives, and attitudes. The blessed man knows truth, knows that he knows it, and practices it! He knows the source of that truth is found in the Bible—not in human dogmas and man-made traditions.

He Believed In Giving Good Counsel To Youth

All of Psalm 119 is addressed to youth, the aged and all those in between. The *Beth* section begins with wise counsel tendered to impressionable youth. The two subsequent verses add additional advice. This trio of verses read:

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid (laid up—ASV) in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psm. 119:9-11).

The young man here is accountable. He is in sin and needs spiritual **cleansing**. How is this brought about for the young man in question? Let us answer negatively first. Sins are not pardoned the way a naïve youth director once told an emotionally charged group of youth around a bonfire. He encouraged all to take sticks, confess their sins to the sticks, cast them into the fire and watch the flames consume the sticks thus burning up their sins! That young man had no business in being a youth director! Had this been the way to deal with the sin problem, Christ and Calvary were totally unnecessary. There were sticks and fire on earth long before Christ became Incarnate. I once studied with a young lady whom I had taught in high school. She had begun to date one of the young men in our congregation where I preached at the time. At first she seemed receptive. Finally, she said, “When I get my life straightened out and my sins taken care of, I will entertain seriously obeying the Gospel.” I failed to reach her. I could not convince her that no life is straightened out and no pardoning occurs other than by Christ and obedience to His Gospel. She was unwilling to accept the concept, “by

taking heed thereto according to thy word.” This is positive posture. The Psalmist knew soul cleansing was by taking heed according to God’s Word—Mosaic mandates as far as he was concerned. For us it is taking heed according to Christ’s commandments. Youth should seek God with wholeness of heart, refusing to wander from God’s commandments and hiding God’s Word in the heart. This is Heaven’s prescribed way of remaining aloof from sin.

He Believed Commandment Keeping Is Imperative

Strict obedience is strongly commended in these great verses from Psalm 119.

Thou has commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently...I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart...So shall I keep thy law continually...I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments...for I will keep the commandments of my God...Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments ...for I do not forget thy commandments (Psm. 119:4; Psm. 119:32; Psm. 119:44; Psm. 119:60; Psm. 119:115; Psm. 119:166; Psm. 119:176).

The Psalmist knew that God’s Word is commandment oriented. His commandments are to be kept diligently, eagerly, continually, in order to be saved and never forgotten. The Psalmist would have had no sympathy for those in our day who downgrade, demean and defy commandment keeping. Commandments did not turn him off as they do with modern religionists en masse. We need to keep in mind that commandments from Heaven did not cease at Calvary. Christ’s commandments are currently in force and will be till time’s end. They permeate the entirety of the New Testament.

He Believed God's Word Is Law

Like the term "commandments," "law" is not an **in** term with the religious masses in our day. Yet, the Psalmist used this term some 25 times in Psalm 119. Had an antinomian written this chapter he would have used it zero times! Here is a stately sampling of law's usage in Psalm 119:

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord...Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law...O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day...I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love...They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law...I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love (Psm. 119:1; Psm. 119:18; Psm. 119:97; Psm. 119:113; Psm. 119:150; Psm. 119:163).

We walk in the law. The law is filled with wondrous things for our beholding. Law is worthy of our deepest love and daily meditation. Vain things should be hated. God's law should be loved. Those who major in mischief are far from God's law. Lying is to be on our **hate** list. God's law is to be on our **hallowed** list. Lying makes loving law very unlikely and loving law means lying will not be tolerated at all.

Do we have law in the Gospel? Most assuredly! Paul thought so and taught it in Romans 3:28; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2. James thought so and taught it in James 1:25 and James 2:12. A Change Agent among us once preached a Sunday night series of lessons on Galatians. A friend of mine heard one of his lessons in which he denied any and all law for Christians. When he came to Galatians 6:2 did he engage in exegesis or eisegesis? I think I know. The former is lifting from the passage what is there; the latter is lifting from the passage what is not there, never was and never shall be!

He Believed God's Word Is Filled With Delight

Instead of finding it dull, dreary, boring and uninteresting, he found it to be delightful, joyful, pleasurable and eagerly exciting. Here are some of his delightful insights:

I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word...Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors...make me to go in the paths of thy commandments; for therein do I delight...And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved...Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law...Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight...unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished, in mine affliction...I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight (Psm. 119:16; Psm. 119:24; Psm. 119:35; Psm. 119:47; Psm. 119:70; Psm. 119:77; Psm. 119:92; Psm. 119:174).

An attitude like this **never** asks, "Do I have to attend every worship period?" A sweet and precious child who is three years old often asks a parent and grandparent, "Is today church time?" A veteran of the faith recently said to me, "I do not understand anyone who **wants** to miss a single church service!" I am of the same persuasion. Deliberate church absenteeism does not grow out of a deep delight in the Word of God Almighty. Here is the secret to daily Biblical meditation as per Psalm 1:2.

He Believed Great Riches Resided In God's Word

Three passages so attest:

The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver...Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine

gold...I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth
great spoil (Psm. 119:72; Psm. 119:127; Psm.
119:162).

Gold, silver and spoils reaped from a victorious battle were highly valued by the ancients in the era of the Psalmist and still are among modern people. The Psalmist was cognizant of all this. Yet God's Word, to him, towered far above gold, silver and battle spoils. The former was on a tall, majestic mountain; the latter three were in a deep valley. Relatively, few in our day could march to the side of the Psalmist and declare truthfully, "These are my stately sentiments toward the Holy Bible." The late and lamented Franklin Camp used to sum up the book of Ephesians in the following manner: the **wealth** of the church in chapters 1-3; the **walk** of the church in chapters 4-5; the **warfare** of the church in chapter 6. In Psalm 119 we find wealth, walking and spiritual warfare. Just how rich is God's Word to each of us in 2005?

He Believed God's Word Demanded Wholehearted Devotion

Four passages so affirm:

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart...With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments...I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word...I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep thy statutes (Psm. 119:2; Psm. 119:10; Psm. 119:58; Psm. 119:145).

The Psalmist is not speaking of the blood pump in the chest region of the human anatomy. The Biblical heart is the marvelous mind of man—one of the greatest gifts God has vouchsafed man. It is composed of intellect (reasoning powers), emotions (loving, trusting powers), will power (decision making ability backed by action) and the

conscience (the “oughtness” or that which accuses us when we do what we know is wrong and excuses us when we do what we deem is right—Rom. 2:15). God made man’s mind and adapted fully His Word to the marvels of man’s mind. The two are not at odds with each other at all. Patriarchy, the Mosaic system and Christianity have all been heart-oriented—wholehearted orientation. Matthew 22:37 is Jesus’ assessment of wholehearted love for Deity.

He Believed God’s Word Binds People Into Sweet, Helpful Fellowship

Three verses so attest:

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts...they that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I hoped in thy word...Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies (Psm. 119:63; Psm. 119:74; Psm. 119:79).

Such people bond beautifully and blend harmoniously. They are like those mentioned later in the Old Testament, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name” (Mal. 3:16). Loners feel no such compulsion. Neither do those who feel far more at home among the wicked and worldly than in sweet, beautiful and harmonious fellowship with God’s people. “Blest be the tie that binds” is a lovely lyric but it needs to be embedded deeply into our lives.

He Believed Falsehood Should Be Hated

A duet of declarations so attest his feelings:

Through thy precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way...Therefore I

esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way (Psm. 119:104; Psm. 119:128).

Our postmodern world which overflows with pluralism and almost total toleration for all religious, political and secular doctrines cannot march to the Psalmist's side and say, "These are our sentiments precisely stated." The one thing postmodernism will not tolerate is hatred for what is error and all opposition to falsehood! Truth and error are the antithesis of each other; they have no compatibility. We cannot love God unless we hate Satan. We cannot love Christ unless we hate Belial. We cannot love the spirit of truth unless we hate the spirit of falsehood. We cannot love truth unless we hate error. We cannot love godliness unless we hate ungodliness. We cannot love righteousness unless we hate unrighteousness. We cannot love temperance unless we hate intemperance. We cannot love piety unless we hate impiety. Truth and error cannot be on the same level in the heart of God's saint.

He Believed In The Quickening Power Of God's Word

Three passages come to mind in attestation of this firm faith on his part:

My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word...I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me...I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word (Psm. 119:25; Psm. 119:93; Psm. 119:107).

Such never could be said if the Bible were a dead document minus any and all convicting, converting and sanctifying power. The Psalmist knew it was a living vibrant and power packed book. Now is no time for our brethren to opt

for some type of visionary, evasive, subjective and direct power of the Holy Spirit working on the heart of sinner/saint separate and apart from this quickening Word of God Almighty.

He Believed Spiritual Value Accrued From Affliction

Two verses come to mind relative to this belief on his part: “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psm. 119:67; Psm. 119:71). Jesus was made perfect by what He suffered (Heb. 5:8-9). This was the completion for the work He came to accomplish. James speaks of the joy we can and must feel when we fall into divers temptations (Jas. 1:2-4). Facing afflictions will make us better or bitter. We determine which one. The Psalmist knew he had been made better by the afflictions that came his way. A man upon a hospital bed with serious or even terminal sickness has only one way to look—up! To such people worldly baubles become meaningless and worthless.

He Believed The Sum Of God’s Word Is Truth

In the ASV for Psalm 119:160 we have affirmed, “The sum of thy word is truth.” The KJV has, “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” The whole of anything includes all its component parts. If the whole is true, each component part has to be true. Creation is true in Genesis 1-2. Heavenly reality is true in Revelation 21-22. All component parts in between are truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth. God is truth; Christ is truth; the Spirit is truth. Their Book, the Holy Bible, is truth and nothing but truth. God spoke truth; that settled it; the Psalmist believed

it. To this we also must subscribe. Truth is unchanging and unchangeable. Make no mistake about this.

He Believed God's Word Is Settled And Here To Stay

In a breathtakingly beautiful and delightful declaration he stated, "for ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psm. 119:89). God's Word is stamped with eternity. With marching militancy Isaiah boldly affirmed that the Word of God would stand forever (Isa. 40:8). Jesus said heaven and earth would pass but His Word would never pass (Matt. 24:35). Peter stamped that Word as being eternal in 1 Peter 1:23 and 1 Peter 1:25. Jehoiakim thought he could cut it and burn it but it stood (Jer. 36). Diocletian, Roman Emperor, thought he had destroyed it but it stood. Voltaire and Ingersoll predicted its soon-to-occur demise. They died; it survived in triumph. It has been banned, burned, rejected and banished yet it lives. It is settled in heaven and its fixity is established on earth.

He Believed In Loving God's Word Supremely

Five passages come to mind along this line:

And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved...My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes...O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day...I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love...I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love (Psm. 119:47-48; Psm. 119:97; Psm. 119:113; Psm. 119:163).

The Sacred trinity cannot be separated from Their Word. We cannot love God, Christ and the Spirit without loving supremely the Word they bequeathed us. There can be no right attitudes toward the Bible minus a deep and abiding

love for its Sacred contents. To a great extent our lives reflect whether we really love His Word or not.

He Believed In Sticking To God's Word Come What May

Psalm 119:31 states in the brevity of beauty, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame." The late and lamented B. C. Goodpasture, at 17 years of age, preached his first sermon, in October of 1912. He preached on faith. During October, 1972, he observed his 60th anniversary of preaching/speaking at Hillsboro in Nashville where he had done local work for some 13 years and served in the eldership for some 20 years at that time. Out of thousands of Biblical verses he could have used as a textual basis for his sermon that day, he chose Psalm 119:31. He told how he had sought to do this for 60 years fully preaching the whole counsel of God. He had stuck to it as a preacher, teacher, lecturer, writer, editor, elder and in his personal life with family and friends. He lived another four and one-half years and still stuck to God's Word. I heard his last sermon in February of 1977 on "Paul's Final Charge To Timothy." In it he was still sticking to God's Word.

When I am dead and gone I would rather have people remember me as one who stuck to the Word of God as any other memory. This I have sought to do for 56 years as a preacher and 61 years as a Christian. This I wish fervently to be my lasting legacy.

He Believed In Holding God's Word In Awe

We read in Psalm 119:161: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word." This is my all time favorite verse in all of Psalm 119. I love to preach on this verse and write about it.

The Psalmist held that Word in awe because it was/is inspired, authoritative, infallible, all-sufficient, powerful, precious, profitable, inexhaustible and eternal in its noble nature. Can we afford to have attitudes less than this relative to God's Word? This Word did not originate from a human source. It originated from a Divine source. Can each of us march to the side of the Psalmist and say, "I, too, hold the Word of God in profound awe?" We should; we must; we shall!

Conclusion

God's Word is extolled, exalted, magnified and lifted to the mountain peaks of literary excellence and Divine perfection in Psalm 119. O, what a chapter this is!

CHAPTER 23

What Jesus Believed About The Bible

Darrell Beard

Introduction

ONE MIGHT ASK, “*WHY* should I care what Jesus believed about the Scriptures of His day? Why should what one man believed about the Bible cause me to believe it?” If Jesus was a mere man and His was only a personal opinion about the Scriptures, we might have reason to ask the above question.

If, however, Jesus were Deity – the only-begotten Son of God — that would dramatically change matters. No one denies that there really was a man named Jesus who lived in Nazareth some two thousand years ago. All thoughtful people realize that Jesus had the greatest impact for good upon the world. Unbelievers even recognized that Jesus was the greatest teacher and religious leader in the history of the world.

There is no doubt that the claim made for Jesus in the New Testament is that He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Neither is there any doubt that Jesus, according to the New Testament, made this claim and accepted this confession for Himself (Matt. 16:17). In John 4, Jesus conversed with a Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar. By their conversation, she at first believed that he was a prophet (John 4:19). She

asked Jesus about the controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews concerning the acceptable place of worship. As Jesus told her about worship in spirit and in truth, she said, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." Jesus responded, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25-26). Later, the woman told her fellow residents of the city, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29).

Those who committed the New Testament to written form knew whereof they spoke. Some wrote of things they personally saw and heard from Jesus. The writer of the Gospel of John closed his book with these words: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). He repeated in his first epistle:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1; 1 John 1:3).

Peter affirmed in his second epistle:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

Those who claimed to have written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit had no reason to misrepresent the truth about Jesus as the Christ. Humanly speaking, they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, for saying what they did. They were intelligent, honest, and sincere men. Many of them sacrificed their lives for their testimony concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ. If anyone ever could know for sure about the Divine nature of Jesus, it would be these men. If anyone could ever discover that Jesus' claims for Himself were false, they were the ones who could uncover that dirty fact.

Because of Who and what Jesus Christ was and is, I am convinced that what He believed about the Bible is true and it is this conviction that I gladly share with Him.

People Were Amazed At Jesus' Knowledge Of Scripture

Jesus' grasp of the Scriptures of His day could not be explained on the human level. It was far above what the scholars and law experts of His day could attain by study. Even more amazing was the fact that Jesus was regarded as the son of a mere, average carpenter.

Even at the tender age of twelve years, people "were astonished at his understanding and answers" as He talked with the doctors of the Law in the temple (Luke 2:46-47). Years later, those who heard Jesus teach in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth "were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matt. 13:54). They knew Jesus as the carpenter's son; they knew His mother, his brothers, and His sisters, and could not explain how He came by the knowledge He had (Matt. 13:55-56).

When Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath days, the people "were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power" (Luke 4:31-32).

Even the officers who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to take Jesus came back without Him and said, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

The conversation of Jesus was liberally sprinkled with incidental expressions that came from Scripture. Although not always intended as exact quotations, Jesus freely used words, expressions, and concepts directly from the pages of Old Testament inspiration. He strengthened and reinforced things He taught by using expressions taken from Scripture. For example, once He assured His disciples, “Fear not, little flock. . .” (Luke 12:32 from Zech. 9:16). He added in Luke 12:35, “Let your loins be girded” (from Jer. 1:17). In Luke 16:15, Jesus criticized the Pharisees by using words from Proverbs 16:5, “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD.”

The remaining part of our lesson will be devoted to looking at six things Jesus believed about the Bible.

Jesus Believed In The Integrity, Inspiration, And Authority Of Scripture

Jesus believed in the **integrity** of Scripture. He endorsed the Old Testament’s record of the facts and events recorded therein. He accepted the account of Creation as recorded by Moses in Genesis 1-2 as true. Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 to show that God made man male and female, and that God’s original intent was that they become and remain one flesh (Matt. 19:4-6).

Jesus endorsed the Bible account of Noah and the ark, saying that conditions before the flood would be similar to the conditions before the Second Coming (Matt. 24:37-39). He believed in the literal, historical nature of Jonah and the great fish. He compared the three days and nights that Jonah was in the belly of the whale to the three days and nights that He would be in the heart of the earth after His crucifixion (Matt. 12:39-40).

Jesus frequently talked about persons and places mentioned in the Scriptures as true people and locations of historical reality. The Lord talked about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; David and Solomon; Elijah and Elisha; Naaman the leper; Lot and Lot's wife; and "from the blood of Abel to Zachariah (Luke 11:51).

Jesus attributed statements from, and books named for, prophets of God and expressed the fact that these things came from the very men whose names the books bore. This is especially impressive as Jesus spoke of the prophet Isaiah and the various things he wrote. Even though liberal scholars attribute the book of Isaiah to two, probably three, different men, only one of whom was the historical Isaiah, being the author of chapters 1-39 in the book, Jesus quoted all parts of the book and attributed them all to the man Isaiah. See Mark 7:6-10 and John 12:38-41 for quotations from Isaiah 6:10; Isaiah 29:13; and Isaiah 53:1.

In Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus was discussing the destruction of the temple: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. . . ." Notice that Jesus does not merely quote from the book of Daniel, He quotes "Daniel the prophet."

Jesus believed in the **inspiration** of the Bible. On one occasion, Jesus proposed to the Pharisees how it could be that Christ was the son of David. Quoting from Psalm 110:1, Jesus said, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:43-45). Jesus attributed the words written by David as being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus endorsed the entire composition of the books of the Bible in His day. After His resurrection, Jesus

appeared to the apostles and told them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). The three categories of Law, Prophets, and Psalms were the divisions into which the books of the Old Testament were arranged in Jesus’ day.

Jesus held to the **authority** of Scripture and insisted that people respect and obey its contents. When the “rich young ruler” asked Jesus what good thing he must do to have eternal life, the Lord responded, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” The young man asked “Which?” to which Jesus replied: “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 19:16-19). In this reply, Jesus cited five of the Ten Commandments, as a means of showing that they must be obeyed, and quoted from Leviticus 19:18. Back in Matthew 5:19, Christ had said that whoever breaks one of the least commandments of the Law or the prophets will be counted least in the kingdom, but whoever will do and teach them will be counted as greatest in the kingdom.

Jesus Believed That People Ought To Read And Understand The Scriptures

As the King James Version represents it, Jesus admonished people: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). The American Standard Version of 1901, the New King James, and other translations represent Jesus as saying that they were searching the Scriptures and all the time these were testifying of Him. Nevertheless, Jesus approved of people searching through the Bible.

There were occasions in which Jesus rebuked the people for not having read and understood the Scriptures

to avoid foolish and false positions. On one occasion, some Pharisees asked Jesus if it were lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause. Jesus responded, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Matt. 19:3-5). If these people had made the proper implications from what the Bible recorded, they could have avoided false views concerning divorce.

In another session with the Pharisees, Jesus asked, “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in your eyes?” (Matt. 21:42).

The Sadducees were also the targets of this sort of rebuke from the Lord. One day some Sadducees came to Jesus and proposed to him a scenario concerning a man who had died. As Moses taught, if a man died childless, his brother or nearest of kin could marry her and raise up children in his name. But in this case, seven brothers in turn had married this woman. The question with which they intended to “stump” Jesus was, “In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her” (Matt. 22:28). The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and had used this story to make people think that a belief in the resurrection involved great difficulties. However, Jesus answered, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God . . . have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God. . .?” (Matt. 22:23-31).

Jesus Believed Scripture Ought To Be Quoted And Properly Applied

Since Jesus believed in the integrity, inspiration, and authority of Biblical writings; and since He encouraged and expected people to read and understand Scripture,

He consistently appealed to the Word of God in teaching people or in refuting false ideas or practices.

Responding to the criticism that Jesus was eating with publicans and sinners, the Lord told them, “Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13). He here quotes again from Hosea 6:6.

Jesus justified His driving the money changers out of the temple by quoting Scripture. He said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13). Jesus cited things said in Isaiah 56:7 and Ezekiel 7:22.

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus exclaimed:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin,
and have omitted the weightier matters of the
law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye
to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Reference here was made to Micah 6:6-8.

In Luke 17:26-33, Jesus compared “the days of the Son of man” to the “days of Noah,” and “the days of Lot.” He referred to the destruction of Sodom, and He said “remember Lot’s wife.” Things that were recorded in Scripture would help people to understand what was yet to come.

Jesus Believed That There Was A Special Relationship Between Himself And The Law of Moses

Our Lord discussed His relationship with the Law of Moses in Matthew 5:17-20:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or
the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to
fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and
earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise
pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever

therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus did not come to violently tear the Law apart. Rather, He came to complete or accomplish the end to which God had appointed it. Until that happened, the Law would remain, and people were expected to obey it, thus exceeding the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers (Matt. 23:1-4).

Frequently, Jesus came into conflict with these scribes and Pharisees who bound their traditions, rather than the Law of God, upon people. In their opposition to Jesus, they often accused Him and His disciples of breaking the Law. Thus, the Lord had to defend Himself as not truly breaking the Law, even though He went against their cherished traditions, opinions, and customs. Once again, Jesus turned to the Scriptures to show that the charges were false. Note some specific examples in the next section.

While being tempted of the devil, Jesus showed His determination to live by every commandment and principle of Scripture. Each temptation was met with a firm “It is written” (Matt. 4:1-10).

The Savior pointed people to the higher standards of moral, spiritual, and ethical conduct, rather than the trite and trivial regulations made up by the religious leaders of the day. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23). Jesus did not think that tithing of the small garden herbs was unimportant, but was saying that being scrupulous in things like this could not take the place of living by the great principles of conduct.

Jesus showed His zeal that the temple be preserved as a house of prayer, as God intended it to be. This was illustrated in His driving the moneychangers and sellers of animals from the temple. “And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:17).

Jesus manifested His respect for the ordinances of the Law by sending a man whom He had healed of leprosy to the priest, telling him, “and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them” (Mark 1:44).

As the time of His betrayal and death drew near, Jesus made arrangements to eat the Passover with His disciples (Matt. 26:18-20). It was on this occasion that He instituted the Lord’s Supper, saying that the cup represented “my blood of the new testament” (Matt. 26:28).

When the rich young ruler urgently asked what he must do to have eternal life, Jesus told him, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17). In that special situation, Jesus gave a command from His personal authority: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matt. 19:21).

The two above events bring us back to the Lord's promise in Matthew 5:17-19 that He would "fulfil" the Law and that it would "pass" away. That statement was followed in the Sermon on the Mount by a number of contrasting statements showing what had been taught under the Law of Moses and what would be binding on people by His authority.

Rather than merely avoiding murder, as taught in the Ten Commandments, Jesus said that one must not be violently angry with a brother or use spiteful language against him (Matt. 5:21-22). Not only would it be sinful to commit the physical act of adultery, the Lord forbade looking on a woman lustfully (Matt. 5:27-28).

Instead of allowing a man to simply divorce his wife and give her a writing of divorce (Deut. 24:1), Christ said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:31-32). Other contrasts are made in Matthew 5:33; Matthew 5:38; Matthew 5:43.

As Jesus prepared for His betrayal and death, He met with the apostles to tell them that they would be the bearers of the message that would come from Himself, and that they would be guided by the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 records: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come."

Jesus Defended Himself From False Charges Of Violating The Scriptures By Quoting Scripture

One such charge is recorded in Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5. Jesus had been going through a field of grain on the sabbath day. Because the disciples

were hungry, they began to pluck the ears of “corn,” rubbing them in their hands, and eating the mature grain. Some Pharisees saw this and challenged Jesus, “Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?” (Luke 6:2). In responding to this false charge, Jesus did the following:

First, He brought up the case of David who, when fleeing Saul, was hungry and entered the house of God and took the shewbread for himself and his followers to eat. This was a clear violation of the Law, but if the Jews could find it in their heart to forgive David for something unlawful, why could they not understand the need of the disciples’ satisfying their hunger? In David’s case, his actions were clearly unlawful, but Jesus defended His disciples’ conduct as “guiltless” (Matt. 12:7). What the disciples did on that occasion might have been contrary to the customs and traditions of the Jews, but did not violate the Law.

Second, Jesus made reference to the work of the priests in the temple on the sabbath day. If the priests could work in behalf of the temple service on the sabbath and be blameless, His disciples could certainly eat from the grain fields while in the company of Jesus and His service. Since Jesus was greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6), service to Him on the sabbath was “blameless” as well (Matt. 12:5-6).

Third, quoting from Hosea 6:6, Jesus said, “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless (Matt. 12:7). In the Pharisees’ zeal for enforcing the traditions of the Jews, they had lost sight of the Law itself and had failed to properly apply it to situations like this.

Next, He made the observation, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath (Mark 2:27). By no means was the Lord denigrating the sabbath and saying that it did not matter what man did on it. The

sabbath was given by God for the rest, peace, and spiritual benefit of mankind. Rather than setting up man-made details as to what a man could not do on the sabbath, making him a servant of the sabbath, it was intended by God for the well-being of His people.

Finally, Jesus made the claim of being “the Lord even of the sabbath day” (Matt. 12:8). This bold assertion was consistent with Jesus’ claim of being the “Messias, ... which is called Christ” (John 4:25-26). Being the “Son of man” qualified the Lord to determine what was right and wrong in connection with Sabbath conduct.

Another action of Jesus that brought forth the charge of violating the Law was His healing people on the sabbath. One such instance is of the healing of a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:9-13; Luke 6:6-11), and another was the healing of a woman with an infirmity that caused her to be bowed together (Luke 13:10-17). Both of these miracles were performed in synagogues on sabbath days.

While in a synagogue on the sabbath, a man whose right hand was withered was set forth by the Pharisees with the question, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?” (Matt. 12:10). “Then Jesus said unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?” (Luke 6:9). He observed that the Law allowed one to pull a sheep out of a pit on the sabbath, and said, “How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Matt. 12:12).

A similar response was given to the minister of another synagogue when he objected to the healing of the woman with an infirmity of eighteen years’ duration (Luke 13:10-17).

The scribes and Pharisees also found fault with Jesus’ disciples not ceremonially washing their hands before they ate. On one occasion they asked Jesus: “Why do thy

disciples transgress the tradition of the elders for they wash not their hands when they eat?” (Matt. 15:1). Mark explained:

For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables (Mark 7:3-4).

The disciples’ actions were not in violation of the law of God, but of traditions men set for others to follow. Jesus’ response was sharp and to the point. “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Matt. 15:3). “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). To illustrate His point, Jesus showed that the Pharisees made allowances for a man to avoid taking care of his aged parents as taught in the Law (Matt. 15:4-6).

Jesus did not violate the Law. Rather, He is the only one who has ever perfectly obeyed the Law of Moses.

Jesus Believed That The Prophecies Of Scripture Were Fulfilled In Him

Toward the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus stood to read from the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2. These words are recorded in Luke 4:18-19:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Following this Scripture reading, Jesus closed the book, gave it back to the minister, and sat down. All eyes

in the synagogue were on Him as Jesus began to say, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

After the visit of the rich young ruler, Jesus conversed with the apostles regarding how difficult it was for those who had riches to enter the kingdom. Following that, He spoke to them:

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again (Luke 18:31-33).

The next verse says that they did not understand what Jesus was telling them.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, two men were travelling from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. Jesus met them and asked what they had been talking about and why they looked so sad. They did not recognize Jesus, but revealed to Him their doubts and confusion about the events of the past three days. They had heard a report of women who had been at the sepulchre, seen a vision of angels, and reported that Jesus was alive. Besides, they had heard of men who had gone to the tomb, but did not find Him there. Jesus said to them:

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

A little later, Jesus appeared to the apostles who had not understood His previous warning about His death. He said to them:

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:44-48).

Conclusion

We should care what Jesus believed about the Bible, for He was not a mere man who lived 2,000 years ago. He presented such evidences to prove that He is the Christ, Divine in nature, the prophesied Son of God. He is the One with all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). He knows that Scripture is inspired and authoritative. He knows the value of reading the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4). However, men will be judged according to **His** words (John 12:48), as revealed in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 24

What The Apostles Believed About The Bible

Michael Hatcher

Introduction

THE BIBLE EXISTS; IT is either true or false. If it is false, then it should be exposed as a fraud and relegated to the trash heap. On the other hand, if it is true, then all need to accept it for what it claims. Others in this book will be considering the truthfulness of the Bible and giving evidence for its acceptance.

Jesus is the One who built the church and He is that good foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Our Lord is the chief cornerstone upon which the church is built: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded” (1 Pet. 2:6). While the church is built upon the chief cornerstone—Jesus the Christ—it also is built upon the apostles: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). Thus, it is important to consider what the apostles had to say about the Scriptures.

Word Of God

The great question we are concerned with is if the Bible is actually the Word of God. How did the apostles

view both what they were writing but also the entirety of the Scriptures? There have been some who have made the claim that when the writers of the Bible were actually writing it, they did not know that it was God's Word. However, the assertion does not meet the facts of the case.

God the Father gave His Son His Word: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). God was speaking through His Son:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

The Son gave that same Word to the apostles:

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me...I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world...As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world (John 17:8, John 17:14; John 17:18).

The apostles were going to be guided by the Holy Spirit in what they taught—both oral and written:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you

into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 14:26; John 16:12-13).

The apostles wrote that Word down knowing it was coming from God and thus God's Word. Numerous times the writers of the New Testament speak of the Word of God. Notice what Paul said regarding the Thessalonians:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

Paul knew that what he was teaching was the Word of God and he was thankful that they received it as such instead of simply being the word of man. On another occasion he would state: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul knew that what he taught orally was the Word of God, and was thankful that the Thessalonians accepted it as such, and he also knew that what he wrote was the commandments of God and not from himself.

Peter also recognized that what he was writing was the Word of God. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). Then he states that what he was writing was that Word: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:25). He knew that the Word he was writing (**this is the Word**) was the Gospel and that it was the Word of God.

There will be many evidences given in this book showing that the Bible is the Word of God, so we will not go into a discussion of the numerous evidences in this chapter.

Inspired

Prior to our Lord's death, He called His apostles to Him to exhort them (John 14-16). During this encouragement, He informs them about the Holy Spirit coming to them. Notice His comments:

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 14:25-26; John 16:12-13).

Notice that which Christ says the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will do: (1) teach them all things or guide them into all truth, (2) bring everything He had said to their remembrance, (3) show them things to come.

As the apostles went out teaching, Jesus told them:

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost (Mark 13:11).

The Holy Spirit was selecting the words (within the background, vocabulary, etc.) which the apostles would speak. Consider Jeremiah's statement concerning this:

“Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). God, through the Holy Spirit, was putting His words into the prophets’ and apostles’ mouths.

Paul writes:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The Spirit searches the mind of God and knows the deep things of God. He then reveals those deep things of God to man by the means of words. When they spoke, they were not speaking man’s words but words which the Holy Spirit gave them.

We also learn that the Spirit did this regarding their writings. Peter teaches us:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake **as they were moved** by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Scripture is that Sacred Writing and Peter says that those men who wrote those writings were **moved** (literally

borne or carried along) by the Spirit. The words they wrote were the words which the Spirit gave them.

Paul states:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and **is** profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Again, Scripture is that Sacred Writing, and that writing is inspired of God. **Inspired of God** comes from one Greek word which literally means God-breathed. These Words came from the very breath of God—not man.

This author would note that there are several differing views on inspiration. Most all will acknowledge that the Scriptures are inspired, but what they mean by inspired is far different than what the Bible claims. They believe that the Bible is inspired as any work of art, literature, or musical piece is inspired. The rank modernist will claim that the Scriptures are inspired, and they will even agree that they are inspired of God. They believe that the Bible is inspired by God in its overall teaching, but they would state that there are mistakes in the Bible because while the overall teaching and meaning comes from God, the writers of the Scriptures wrote by their own understanding and their own words.

Paul shows that he believes the Bible is verbally or word by word inspired. Paul's use of "inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16) implies that the very words that are used come from God. The words which were written down came from God's breath. We see this applied when Paul argues that the promise made to Abraham was a promise about Christ when he writes, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Paul argues on whether or not a word in the Hebrew

text is singular or plural form. If every word does not come from the breath of God, then Paul's argument is worthless. Truly they were speaking and writing **words** which the Holy Spirit gave them (1 Cor. 2:13).

All-Sufficient

The apostles viewed the Bible as all-sufficient. But, what do we mean by all-sufficient? We mean that the Bible contains facts of a religious nature, guiding principles, and truths to meet every moral and religious question or need. Another way of putting it is that the Bible is all-sufficient in the realm of Christian faith. The Bible contains everything we need to guide us as to live in such a way as to obtain heaven's home.

John gives the purpose of his writing the account of the life of Christ when he writes:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

He says he was writing to produce belief in those who would read his book and through that belief they would have life through the name of Christ. This life is the abundant life in the here and now (John 10:10) and eternal life in the hereafter (John 3:16-17). If what John wrote could produce the type of belief that was necessary for one to have eternal life, what else would one need?

In writing his epistle, John states: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). John has already stated that he is writing that **our** joy might be full (1 John 1:4) and will later state that he is writing that we might know we

have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Between these two purposes for his letter, John reveals that he is writing so we will not sin. “That ye sin not” in the Greek is the aorist tense and is generally considered point of action. As used by John here, he is saying that the purpose of his writing is so we will not commit even one isolated act of sin. While John recognizes that we will commit isolated acts of sin (1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10), when we do, we have an advocate with the Father. Yet, John is saying that through what he writes, we will never commit even one sin. If what John writes is able to do this, then what else do we need other than that Word. John viewed the Scriptures as totally sufficient to instruct us how to live acceptably to God so we will not sin and thus have the joy that is in Christ (Phil. 4:4) and eternal life.

We have previously considered Paul’s statements concerning inspiration as he writes to Timothy:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

This passage also shows the sufficiency of the Scriptures when they are used properly. Paul lists four things for which the Bible is profitable: (1) doctrine, which simply means teaching, (2) reproof, which is a proving or establishing of what is right and wrong, (3) correction, to bring a person who has gone astray back to the right way, (4) instruction in righteousness, instruction is the totality of teaching and righteousness is that which is right as revealed by God’s commandments (Psm. 119:172) or the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul then gives us three things which the Scriptures are able to do when used in these four ways: (1) make us a man of God, (2) make us

perfect, (3) make us completely furnished to all good works. Consider each of these three.

First, when used as God designed, the Bible is able to make us a man of God. One becomes a man of God by obedience to His Word in being born again (John 3:3; John 3:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). Through that new birth we become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) and we are then children of God (Gal. 3:26-27). As children of God, we have the blessings which He will give to his children (Eph. 1:3), and as His children we will inherit eternal life (Rom. 8:16-17).

Second, the Scriptures will make us perfect. While we use the word “perfect” as a synonym for sinless, that is not its meaning in the Scriptures. It is the Greek *artios* and means “one able to meet all demands,”¹ “complete, sufficient, completely qualified (2 Tim. 3:17)....one in which all the parts are complete or whole and what they are supposed to be, so that they might serve their destined purpose.”² If one is able to meet all demands, they are complete, sufficient, and completely qualified, what is there lacking as far as spiritual maturity is concerned? The Scriptures (without anything else and when used properly) make us where we lack nothing that is necessary. Third, the Bible is able to totally furnish us to every good work. What good works are lacking? None! Good works are those works which God has authorized us to do. Therefore, the Scriptures are able to fully equip man to do all that God has authorized. Paul viewed the Scriptures as all that man needs to do all that God has said for him to do; he viewed them as all-sufficient.

Peter also considered the Bible as all-sufficient. He writes:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called

us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

Through God's power He gave us His Word so we might come to a knowledge of Him. Thus, the things mentioned by Peter here come by the Bible and our study of and knowledge of it. Notice four things which Peter says comes by the Scriptures: (1) life, (2) godliness, (3) partaker of the Divine nature, (4) escape the corruption that is in the world. **Life** would be the abundant life here and eternal life in the hereafter. **Godliness** is "a articular manner of life characterized by reverence toward God and respect for the beliefs and practices related to him."³ **Partaker of the Divine nature** is one who takes on the attributes or characteristics of God.

Then we can **escape the corruption of this world**. That corruption comes through lust (cf. 1 John 2:15-17), which is contrary to God and His nature. Since we can have all these things by the Scriptures (a knowledge of God), then we do not need anything else because the Bible is all-sufficient to get us to that heavenly kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11).

Truth

Truth is defined as "the quality or state of being true." **True** is "in accordance with fact or reality." We find that Jesus is the Revealer of Truth: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and **truth** came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). In speaking to Pilate, Jesus stated:

Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (John 18:37).

He shows that His Word is truth when He says, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

The apostles recognized and believed that the Bible is Truth. Peter would write, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). The Spirit revealed the Word to the apostles and Peter says that which the Spirit gave is Truth.

Paul also viewed the Bible as Truth when he wrote: “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5). Paul realizes that the Gospel is the Truth. It is that Truth which produces fruit in our lives (Col. 1:6) when we submit ourselves to it. He also says that we can come to a knowledge of that Truth: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). This corresponds to what Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Realizing that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), we can come to understand it: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). Peter lets us know that we can obey the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). Paul then lets us know what happens to those who do not obey by saying: “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath” (Rom. 2:8). Thus, the Truth is the gospel in that it is bringing good news or glad tidings and that one who obeys it will bring forth the proper fruit, but the one who fails to obey will have the wrath of God upon him.

The Bible is Truth, but if there is Truth, there is also error. The apostles know this and warned others about

those who would teach error. John states: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Paul told the Ephesian elders:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

Paul warned them and certainly we have that responsibility also. Jude said:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort **you** that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Those who are false teachers are to be marked and avoided:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

This is to be done because of a love for the Truth, and knowing that only Truth can save, and error condemns. The apostles knew that the Bible is Truth and respected it as such.

Saved By

Many, even within the Lord’s church, have forgotten that it is the Gospel that saves us. Man today tries to use

entertainment, recreation, and such like to appeal to man and save man. Through the years there has been a change from a spiritual thrust of the church to a social emphasis, in spite of Jesus' statement to Pilate:

My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).

Modern religion has changed things from saving man's soul to trying to save the earth. However, the apostles recognized that man needed saving spiritually. To that end they preached the Gospel to man and instructed others to do so:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2).

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

After feeding the five-thousand men, Jesus taught them about the True Bread of Life and how man must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life in Him (John 6). (The eating His flesh and drinking His blood are not the Lord's supper but are a taking in of and obedience to His teachings.) As a result of the hard or difficult teachings, many of His disciples left him: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). He then asked the apostles, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). Peter's response is important in seeing the apostles view about the Bible and salvation: "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). There is no other place than the Words

of Christ which will provide eternal life. If we desire salvation, then there is only one place to go. Cute little stories and after dinner speeches, will not save anyone nor will entertainment and recreation. Later Peter would write:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Peter realized that the way to have our souls purified is through our obedience to the Truth. The Truth is that message which had been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles. What was that message? It was/is the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). That Word of God was/is that incorruptible seed which produces a new spiritual life in man when he is born again. A few verses later Peter calls this message the Word of the Lord. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:25). The Spirit was bringing to the apostles' remembrance everything which our Lord said (John 14:26). That which Jesus revealed was Truth (John 1:17; John 14:6) or the Word of God (John 12:48-50; John 17:17). Jesus had stated that the Truth would make us free (John 8:32) which means that the Truth is saving us. Peter thus realized that what he was writing by inspiration of God is that Word which would save man's soul.

Peter also calls that Truth, which would purify our souls, the Gospel (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Pet. 1:25). Paul's informs us that the Gospel is God's power to save sinful mankind. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). There is no other power to save man other than the Gospel. The Gospel is not simply **a way** to save man among many

ways, but **the only way**. How foolish for man to try to save others by another means other than the Gospel. Men try to change and alter it, yet Paul states:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

God has a deep desire for man to be saved. That desire was so great that He gave His only begotten Son to die a cruel death to save us (John 3:16-17). Paul mentions this desire in writing to Timothy when he writes, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). The coming to the knowledge of the truth is the means by which God will save us. As noted, the Truth is that which has been revealed in the Gospel of Christ. Let us study and learn the Truth so God can save us, as Paul said of Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Judged By

One day each person who has ever lived on this earth will stand before God and be judged. Paul stated: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Matt. 25:36; Rom. 14:10; Rom. 14:12). In that judgment there will be a passing of sentence as to where we will spend eternity. All judgment belongs ultimately to God by right of creation. He has given that judgment to His Son: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

The Son will judge us in the last day, but that standard of judgment will be His Words: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

The apostles knew that they were writing the words of Christ (John 14:26). Thus, they set forth that the Scriptures are going to judge us in the last day. Paul stated to the Athenians:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

God is going to judge the world by Christ and He will do so in **righteousness**. **Righteousness** is that which is revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). The psalmist states: “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psm. 119:172). Thus, when he says that it will be “in righteousness,” he is affirming that it will be according to what has been written down—according to the Bible.

Paul states, “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16). He calls it “my gospel.” It would be his in the sense that he has been entrusted with the Truth. He stated concerning that Gospel: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12). He was given the words to speak and write, and those words came from Christ as directed by the Holy Spirit. Thus “my gospel” would be the Scriptures which had been entrusted

into his care—the Bible. It is the Bible by which God will judge us on the last day.

In writing to his son in the faith, he writes:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Notice that Christ is that One who will judge. **Quick** simply means “living,” so He will judge the living and the dead when He comes. Paul then gives the **charge** to “preach the Word.” The basis of the charge is that Jesus Christ will judge the living and dead. Thus, why preach the Gospel? It is simply that the Gospel is that by which the living and dead will be judged. Thus, Paul’s view of the Bible is that it will judge us on the last day.

Jesus stated that His words would judge us on the last day. John gives us a scene of the judgment in Revelation 20. In writing about that scene John states:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

Everyone will stand before God, the Judge of all, and be judged according to what they have done in their lives. He says that the books will be opened, then another book was opened. That book is the book of life which has those names which have lived according to that standard and will be rewarded with heaven’s home. But what are the **books** (plural) that were opened? The Bible contains sixty-six books written by about forty different men, thus it is **books** and not just one book (even though when one puts the sixty-six books together they make a single unit so the

Bible is the Book). Thus, John views the Bible as that which will be opened on the last day and our lives measured up to that standard of the Words of Christ as written down in the Bible.

Conclusion

Since we are going to be judged by those Words, it is important for all to hear the words of the Bible. The apostles recognized this so they took that Word to the entire world (Col. 1:23). They also instructed others to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2) and “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). They recognized the importance of the Bible so when they spoke they quoted it constantly (as a study of their sermons and the books which they wrote shows). Paul had a desire for it when he instructed Timothy: “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13). He also wanted others to know it: “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea” (Col. 4:16).

All the apostles had a deep respect for the Bible as God’s Word, realizing it would judge us in the last day. We need to develop in ourselves and all people today that same respect that will cause us to have that same type of desire to have it, to live by it, and to teach it to others.

Endnotes

1 T. Friberg, B. Friberg, & N. F. Miller, **Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 2000), p. 76.

2 S. Zodhiates, **The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament** (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000). G739.

3 Friberg, p. 181.

CHAPTER 25

What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?

Tyler Young

Introduction

THE BIBLE IS A book both loved and hated. It has been ridiculed, attacked, burned and banned at various times in history in different places around the world. The celebrated nineteenth century intellectual, R.G. Ingersoll, infamous for his venomous and audacious attacks on the Bible and what he perceived of as “Christianity,” said, “The book, called the Bible, is filled with passages equally horrible, unjust and atrocious.” He sarcastically added, “This is the book to be read in schools in order to make our children loving, kind and gentle! This is the book they wish to be recognized in our Constitution as the source of all authority and justice!”¹ Such contempt for the Holy Word of God has become the orthodoxy in the modern academy.

Throughout history countless people have been persecuted for possessing or professing the Bible. Many have promoted and circulated it at the cost of their lives. Even today, there are many innocent souls who have been taken from their families to languish away in prison, people enduring extreme hardship—cast out of their homes, denied employment, beaten, maimed, tortured for the crime of having, reading or believing the Bible. There

are still places where being found with a Bible is a crime carrying severe punishment. Smuggling Bibles into Saudi Arabia carries the same punishment as rape and murder—death. In April of 2005, Saudi police arrested 40 Pakistani men, women and children in Riyadh, saying that “These people tried to spread the poison and their beliefs to others.”² Although media indifference keeps it hidden from the public, this kind of intolerance of professed Bible believers is typical of Muslim nations.

Although the influence of the Bible played a critical role in the formation of our culture and our nation, the movement to secularize society has resulted in efforts by influential groups to expunge the Bible from our public institutions. While the Bible has long been banned in certain Communist and Islamic countries, we are now witnessing Bible-banning in schools and courthouses of our very own beloved America. Examples abound of confusion over the legality of the use of the Bible in public settings, as well as outright discrimination against and hostility toward the Bible and Bible believers. Consider just a few recent cases indicative of the complete reversal of attitude toward the Bible in our legal system and our culture today from what it was throughout our history until just a generation ago:

In March of this year, the Colorado Supreme Court threw out the death penalty sentence of a man convicted of kidnapping, raping and murdering 25-year-old cocktail waitress Rhonda Maloney in 1994. Robert Harlan raped the woman at gunpoint for two hours before fatally shooting her. He was sentenced by a jury of his peers to death, but the court overruled the jury when it learned that at least one of the jurors may have been influenced by the Bible to vote in favor of the death penalty. Justice was denied and Harlan will serve the rest of his life in prison rather than face execution, all because the court regards it unacceptable that at least some jurors

may have actually allowed what the Bible has to say to affect their decision.

As part of a program at Culbertson Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, kindergartner Wesley Busch was allowed to choose his favorite book and have his mother read an excerpt from it to the class. But when Wesley chose the Bible, his mother was barred from reading to the class. Principal Thomas Cook told her that reading the Bible in class is against the law—allegedly a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, behavior popularly believed to be banned on the grounds of the “separation of church and state.”³

Mariam Cattanach, valedictorian of the Class of 2005, was told by school officials of her Spencer, Wisconsin high school that she must not make any reference to Jesus Christ or the Bible during her commencement speech at graduation exercises. Only after the threat of a lawsuit from the civil rights organization, Liberty Council, did the school back down from its attempt to censor the Bible from being cited or even referred to at a school assembly.⁴

After a parent complained that a ten-year-old student used his regularly scheduled recess time to read the Bible with a few friends, the principal at Karns Elementary School in Knoxville, Tennessee, in May of 2005, told a group of students they cannot bring their Bibles to school or study them during recess.⁵

When Michael Marcavage, director of Repent America, attended a local council meeting of Landsdowne, Pennsylvania, where he resides, he attempted to express his objection to the council’s agenda of attracting more homosexuals to the borough (Landsdowne is the first community in Delaware County to have an open homosexual to serve in public office). During the public comment period of the meeting, the president of the council ordered Michael not to

read from the Bible, which he described as “hate speech.” He was reportedly struck by one of the council members, physically removed from the building, and claims to have been assaulted by the Landsdowne police chief, who informed him that he is being charged with “disrupting a public meeting” and “disorderly conduct.” If convicted, he faces up to fifteen months in jail and a \$2,800 fine for attempting to cite the Bible at a public meeting. It does not appear anyone has charged the town council with intolerance or “hate speech” for insulting Bible believers and censoring referral to the Bible at a public meeting.⁶

In 2004, the Canadian government passed and signed into law genocide and hate-crimes legislation which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison. Opponents to the law fear the Bible will be deemed as “hate literature” under the criminal code in certain instances. This fear would seem to be well-founded, as evidenced by the case of a Saskatchewan man fined by a provincial human-rights tribunal in 2001 for taking out a newspaper ad with Scripture references to verses about homosexuality. “Under Saskatchewan’s Human Rights Code, Hugh Owens of Regina, Saskatchewan, was found guilty along with the newspaper, the Saskatoon StarPhoenix, of inciting hatred and was forced to pay damages of 1,500 Canadian dollars to each of the three homosexual men who filed the complaint.” In 2003, the Court of the Queen’s Bench in Saskatchewan upheld the tribunal’s ruling. Reflecting on the silence of the media on the case, columnist Lorne Gunter asked readers to imagine “the hand-wringing if ever a federal court labeled the Quran hate literature and forced a devout Muslim to pay a fine for printing some of his book’s more astringent passages in an ad in a daily newspaper.”⁷

This is of concern to us in America because legislators such as Ted Kennedy and Hillary Clinton have been

attempting for several years to get similar hate-crimes legislation passed in our own nation.

Tragically, these and numerous similar instances manifest an alarming and increasing trend of anti-Christian bigotry in our nation and in Western culture today. Rather than appreciating the profoundly positive impact that Biblical principles have had upon the shaping of the world—Western civilization in particular, and especially the United States of America—the intellectual elites, the glitterati, the mainstream media, and the entertainment industry hold those who profess the Christian religion in contempt. In our ongoing culture war—the conflict between a radical secular worldview and the moral relativism it supports, and a theistic worldview which regards morality as absolute and grounded in the Creator—Bible believers are portrayed in the media and arts—especially the mainstream traditional news outlets and the entertainment industry—as a danger to the world, and the Bible as a tool of oppression. The influence of the Word of God in public and private life is considered a threat to our nation. Ironically, in the name of “tolerance” and “diversity,” anti-Christian activists, unable to promote their radical secular agenda democratically through the legislative process, have used activist judges in our nation’s courts to circumvent the will of the people in order to legalize discrimination against professing Christians, chipping away at their Constitutional rights to free speech and freedom of religion.

Revisionists have purged from many textbooks the positive role that the Bible and professing Christians have played in history.⁸ While glossing over or ignoring altogether the fact that multiplied millions have been murdered as a result of the atheistic philosophy of Communism, they emphasize instead atrocities committed in the name of Christ, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the

Spanish Conquistadors. Given the treatment the Bible and “Christianity”⁹ have been given in recent years by the media and academia, it is little wonder that many believe the Bible is at best irrelevant to modern society, and at worst, a lingering blight in the world’s history. The facts prove otherwise. The widespread ignorance of the tremendous positive impact of the Bible on both the ancient and modern worlds is frustrating and shameful.

There are influential and deluded unbelievers who envision and give themselves to trying to create a utopian world free from the influence of the Bible. But what would such a world look like? Without the influence of the Bible, would the world be better off? Would human history, would current conditions be far better if there were no such thing as the Bible? What if the Bible had never been written?

To counter the dangerous delusions of those suffering from Biblephobia, we ought to be able to answer that question. To those who are ignorant of or attempt to deny the historical record, we should not be ashamed to affirm with confidence that the Bible in general—particularly the principles taught by Jesus Christ contained therein—has done more to alter the world for good than any other book or force in the history of mankind. In order to imagine a world without the Bible, let’s consider how the influence of the Bible upon mankind has made the world better. This should give us an idea, a frightening image, of what it would be like if the Bible had never been written.

The Influence Of The Bible

From their well documented book, **What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?**, here are some highlights from Dr. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe of some of the positive contributions the Bible has made through the centuries:

1. Hospitals, which essentially began during the Middle Ages.
2. Universities, which also began during the Middle Ages. In addition, most of the world's greatest universities were started by Christians for Christian purposes.
3. Literacy and education for the masses.
4. Capitalism and free-enterprise.
5. Representative government, particularly as it has been seen in the American experiment.
6. The separation of political powers.
7. Civil liberties.
8. The abolition of slavery, both in antiquity and in more modern times.
9. Modern science.
10. The discovery of the New World by Columbus.
11. The elevation of women.
12. Benevolence and charity; the good Samaritan ethic.
13. Higher standards of justice.
14. The elevation of the common man.
15. The condemnation of adultery, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions. This has helped to preserve the human race, and it has spared many from heartache.
16. High regard for human life.
17. The civilization of many barbarian and primitive cultures.
18. The codifying and setting to writing of many of the world's languages.
19. Greater development of art and music. The inspiration for the greatest works of art.
20. The countless changed lives transformed from liabilities into assets to society because of the Gospel.
21. The eternal salvation of countless souls...

All of these benefits have their origins in the Christian faith.¹⁰

In the remainder of the book, the authors proceed to provide abundant documentation of these points. It should be kept in mind that these authors are sectarians and are using the term “Christian” of all religious groups professing belief in Christ and the Bible. While Christ has but one true church, and it is not a denomination nor is it composed of denominations—in fact, Scripture condemns the very concept of denominationalism (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:4-6)—it is nevertheless true that the basic principles of morality taught by Christ have exerted an enormous impact on the world even through professed “Christians” who have practiced a perverted “form” of “Christianity.” We can recognize the extent of the Bible’s influence through those who were not faithful to all of the Word of God without condoning their perversion and rejection of particular Bible doctrines.

The Bible And Mankind

Consider further a few specific areas of influence of the teaching of Christ in the Bible. The love of Christ, as reflected in the love of His followers for each other and all men—even their enemies—had a profound impact in the ancient Roman Empire. Oxford scholar Dr. Robin Lane Fox noted: “When Christians were brought to die in the arena, the crowds, said Tertullian, would shout, ‘Look how these Christians love one another.’”¹⁰ Few today would deny we should love our fellow man, but this kind of brotherly love was revolutionary in the Roman world. And down through history, that love has motivated those professing Christ to extend compassion and benevolent aid in a way unheard of before. As Kennedy and Newcombe point out, prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, we find no trace of any organized charitable efforts. But due to the influence of the New Testament in the lives of men, the needs of countless poor and helpless men, women and children,

have been addressed through the churches, hospitals, orphanages and other benevolent institutions which would not have existed were it not for Christ and the Bible. How many hospitals have been built or how much humanitarian relief has been extended because of the influence of the writings of the world's great infidels or the Koran? What relief have atheist institutions provided for destitute children? Would the countless souls relieved from suffering have been the beneficiaries of such beneficence if the Bible had never been written?

The influence of the teaching and life of Christ through the Bible has dramatically elevated the treatment of man by his fellow man. Horrific practices of the ancient world such as crucifixion and the brutality of gladiatorial games were abolished. Though deeply rooted in the fabric of Roman society, slavery was eventually abrogated. True, the New Testament writers did not call for an immediate overthrow of the institution of slavery. Instead slavery was regulated and mitigated by the Gospel of Christ with a view toward the time when it would wane and finally disappear, as it did both in ancient and modern times, by the Gospel's gradual, leavening influence. The Bible played an integral role in the abrogation of slavery in our own nation. If the Bible had never been written, the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself in our own nation may never have occurred. The Bible has proven to be the fundamental factor in the protection of human rights, and it played a prominent role in the civil rights movement in our own nation.

Though many characterize the Bible as repressive to women, in reality Christianity has done more to elevate the place and treatment of women than any other movement in history. In Muslim, Hindu, and Communist nations, women are still largely treated like property and denied basic human rights. Women in nations where the

practice of fundamentalist Islam is prevalent may not own property or influence political institutions, and may be beaten or even killed at the whim of their husbands or families. This is in stark contrast to the freedoms, equal rights, and protection of women under the law in Western society, which are ultimately the result of the influence of Christian teaching found in the Scriptures.

Because of the Biblical, Judeo-Christian view of man uniquely being made in the image of God, man's estimation of the value of human life increased, which resulted in a historical transformation in the treatment of the elderly, the weak, the infirmed, the unborn, and the newborn. As the traditional Judeo-Christian morality is abandoned and systematically opposed in modern Western culture, belief in the sanctity of human life is being undermined. What are the results? Over forty million babies slaughtered—with the sanction of law—in the American abortion holocaust. A generation has arisen that has not experienced the influence of the Word of God as the previous one had, and the consequences are school shootings; granny dumping; baby dumping; Jack Kevorkian; and Michael Schiavo, who starved his own bedfast wife to death with the permission of our courts. One has observed that, once we took the Bibles out of schools, we had to put metal detectors in. Without the protecting and preserving influence of the Bible, no one is truly safe.

The Bible And America

Many raised in the present, post-Christian era would be surprised to learn that one of the great testimonies of the impact of the Bible and the principles of Christ found on its pages is the United States of America itself. While Judeo-Christian beliefs are held up to ridicule by the media and our “Christian” heritage is denied and deprecated, the truth is that we in America enjoy a degree of freedom and

civil liberty unprecedented in the history of the world largely because of the influence of the Bible in the founding and forming of our nation. Our Constitutional form of government can be traced back ultimately to traditions of law and government based on fundamental Biblical principles. John Quincy Adams once said, “The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”¹¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, after carefully observing American life in 1830, wrote:

There is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America and there can be no greater proof of its utility, and of its conformity to human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation on earth.¹²

In other words, if the Bible had never been written, there would be no America as we know it. Sadly, Tocqueville’s assessment is rejected by most today. Instead of acknowledging and appreciating the truth that respect for Biblical principles is the basis for the unparalleled freedom and prosperity which have made us the envy of the world, we are told instead that Christianity, with its absolute moral code, is an impediment to freedom. Writing for **The Nation**, columnist Katha Pollit assessed the influence of Bible believers and so-called “values voters” in the 2004 national elections as only a temporary setback to the advancement of the cause to liberate the culture from the shackles of the Bible’s moral standards. She confidently asserted “that in the long run equality and tolerance and liberal sexual mores will win out over repressive Christian ‘moral values.’”¹³ Her warped perspective has become typical in segments of the culture today.

Much more could be added about the founding fathers’ attitude toward the Bible and the resulting effect

upon our culture, as well as the present reversal of conditions due to the departure from that attitude. The evils which plague America today—including increased suicide, violent crime, unwed pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases among our youth, the breakdown of the home, the overall deplorable state of public education, and the frightening devaluing of human life—can all be traced back to the rejection of Biblical morality for moral relativism, the hedonism of radical individualism which enthrones self, rather than God, on the throne.

In recognition of the Bible's influence upon our nation, the United States Congress said, in a Joint Resolution authorizing and requesting the President to proclaim 1983 as the "Year of the Bible":

Whereas the Bible, the Word of God, has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people;

Whereas deeply held religious convictions springing from the Holy Scriptures led to the early settlement of our Nation;

Whereas Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in our Declaration of Independence and the constitution of the United States;

Whereas many of our great national leaders—among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Wilson—paid tribute to the surpassing influence of the Bible in our country's development, as the words of President Jackson that the Bible is "the rock on which our Republic rests";

Whereas the history of our Nation clearly illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Scriptures in the lives of individuals, families, and societies;

Whereas this Nation now faces great challenges that will test this Nation as it has never been

tested before; and Whereas that renewing our knowledge of and faith in God through Holy Scripture can strengthen us as a nation and a people: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President is authorized and requested to designate 1983 as a national “Year of the Bible” in recognition of both the formative influence the Bible has been for our Nation, and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Approved October 4, 1982.¹⁴

In response to this resolution by the nation’s highest lawmaking body, President Ronald Reagan made this Proclamation:

Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.

Deep religious beliefs stemming from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible inspired many of the early settlers of our country, providing them with the strength, character, convictions, and faith necessary to withstand great hardship and danger in this new and rugged land. These shared beliefs helped forge a sense of common purpose among the widely dispersed colonies—a sense of community which laid the foundation for the spirit of nationhood that was to develop in later decades.

The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers’ abiding belief in the inalienable rights of the individual, rights which they found implicit in the Bible’s teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. This same sense of man patterned the convictions of those who framed the English system of law inherited by our own

Nation, as well as the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

For centuries the Bible's emphasis on compassion and love for our neighbor has inspired institutional and governmental expressions of benevolent outreach such as private charity, the establishment of schools and hospitals, and the abolition of slavery.

Many of our greatest national leaders—among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Wilson—have recognized the influence of the Bible on our country's development. The plainspoken Andrew Jackson referred to the Bible as no less than “the rock on which our Republic rests.” Today our beloved America and, indeed, the world, is facing a decade of enormous challenge. As a people we may well be tested as we have seldom, if ever, been tested before. We will need resources of spirit even more than resources of technology, education, and armaments. There could be no more fitting moment than now to reflect with gratitude, humility, and urgency upon the wisdom revealed to us in the writing that Abraham Lincoln called “the best gift God has ever given to man...But for it we could not know right from wrong.”

The Congress of the United States, in recognition of the unique contribution of the Bible in shaping the history and character of this Nation, and so many of its citizens, has by Senate Joint Resolution 165 authorized and requested the President to designate the year 1983 as the “Year of the Bible.”

Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, in recognition of the contributions and influence of the Bible on our Republic and our people, do hereby proclaim 1983 the Year of the Bible in the United States. I encourage all citizens, each in his or her own way, to reexamine and rediscover its priceless and timeless message.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

Ronald Reagan¹⁵

In a cover story published on the eve of the International Year of the Bible, **Newsweek** made a significant statement:

For centuries [the Bible] has exerted an unrivaled influence on American culture, politics and social life. Now historians are discovering that the Bible, perhaps even more than the Constitution, is our founding document: the source of the powerful myth of the United States as a special, sacred nation, a people called by God to establish a model society, a beacon to the world.¹⁶

Acknowledgments like the ones noted above by our Congress and President are in keeping with the tradition of a long line of our nation's leaders. It is a tradition, however, which is being forgotten, hidden from our children, one that is now hated and denied more and more widely. In fact, it is a tradition which our courts have declared to be unconstitutional. What a tragedy to see such hostility to the public recognition of the role the Bible has played in creating the greatest, freest, most prosperous nation in the history of the world!

Upon receiving a Bible from a delegation of black Americans in 1864, the great American leader Abraham Lincoln said, in a quotation previously noted:

In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to men. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it, we could not know right from wrong.

Yet when our current President expresses in even the mildest terms a personal appreciation for the Bible, the media, the leftist elitists and anti-Christian, Christophobic bigots go into full panic mode, alleging that our liberty is in jeopardy, that we are living in a repressive theocracy. Ignorant fools. What they fail to realize is that we would not have the freedom and prosperity we do were it not for the Bible and great leaders of men in our history showing respect for the timeless principles contained within it.

A World Without The Bible

Nearly 150 years ago, William Holmes McGuffey offered an insightful warning worth noting. McGuffey was an outstanding 19th-century educator whose Christian-based textbooks were once widely used in America's public schools and are today considered educational classics. They made a significant contribution to the molding of our national character over several generations. In McGuffey's **Eclectic Reader** of 1854, we find these somber words:

If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undeciding, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there be any such being as God; you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people...Avarice, perjury, ambition, and revenge would walk through the land, and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men.

What McGuffey was describing is what our culture and the world would be like if the Bible had never been written. It is a grim picture of the state toward which we are

heading, as more and more want to act as though the Bible does not exist, that it is not God's Truth, that it need not be heeded, that it may be ignored without consequence, and that it must be silenced. The moral chaos characterizing Western civilization is due in large measure to the cultural elites who have replaced the Bible with their own wisdom, Divine revelation with human reason, the wisdom of God for their own foolishness.

The unsurpassed and profoundly positive influence of Christianity in the world is compelling evidence of the Divine origin of the Sacred document upon which it is based—the Bible. And the conditions which existed before it came into the world and which now exist where it has not been permitted to flourish or where it is being forsaken are a testimony to the desperate need for it, a glimpse of what the world would be like without the Bible.

Conclusion

In the areas of morality, society, law, politics, and education, the Bible has had a profoundly powerful and positive impact on the world. It is the Bible which has made modern civilization possible. The lofty themes, historical scenes, remarkable characters, and intervention of God in human affairs—especially through the redemptive work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ—recorded in the Scriptures have served as the inspiration behind many of the greatest works of music, literature, and art the world has ever known. Although many today attempt to portray belief in the Bible as antagonistic to science, many of the world's greatest minds and pioneers in the area of scientific study were motivated by the Bible. The Biblical worldview provided the framework for modern scientific study and progress, which has made possible a quality of life which past generations could not have imagined.

Multiplied millions of souls have experienced personal transformation in their lives as a result of the power of the Gospel. Countless souls have been rescued from the pit of despair and found relief from the ravages and guilt of sin, from the physical, emotional, and spiritual misery, the hardship, the loss, and ruin which come from living in the darkness without the light of God's Word. How many have found relief from their suffering, shelter for their souls, and purpose for their lives because of the Truth revealed in Scripture? How many have been transformed from a burden to a benefit to society by the love and ethic of Jesus Christ revealed in the Word of God, because they found in the Gospel "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), the Truth to turn them from self and sin to the Savior?

Wherever the Bible goes, wherever it is truly embraced, the quality of life improves for all; wherever it is not received, the home and society deteriorate, and people suffer. How much safer, purer, better is the world because of those living righteously rather than riotously? Is it possible to quantify, to measure the tremendous influence for good that the Bible has had through the ages and continues to have in the lives of men and women who receive it? Without the Bible, how many more of us would be caught in the snares of sin? How many more broken homes and broken lives, murderers and rapists, prisons and prisoners would there be?

The Bible alone contains the correct answers to life's most important questions. Who am I? From where did I come? Why am I here? Where am I going? How should I live? Like the crucifixion of Christ by the very ones He came to save, it is a profoundly tragic irony that the Bible is so despised and opposed by so many when it alone contains the hope for which the human heart longs. Little wonder, then, that, despite the intense opposition to it in

much of the world and even by a growing segment of our own culture, the Bible remains the world's bestselling book. It is the most translated, most published, and widely read book in the world. In **What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?** Kennedy and Newcombe note that "Even in places where the Bible is forbidden, there is a great hunger for the word of God." They relate an interesting story as evidence of how much the Bible means to some:

We in America often take the Scriptures for granted. We usually have more than one copy, and we don't even realize how precious a copy of the Bible is for those who don't have one. For example, I read recently about a remote village in Indonesia named Seko Rongkong, where many Christians had to share just one Bible among all church members. Then they heard about free Bibles available to them in their language; the only catch was they had to walk all the way to Sapah to get them. Yet Sapah was far away—a seven day walk! So a delegate of seven hearty souls walked all the way, picked up the fifteen heavy boxes and carried them all the way back to their village. The United Bible Societies reports that this loving act brought much joy to the villagers. **No other book inspires this kind of incredible excitement and commitment.** The Bible is indeed the Book of books¹⁷ (emp. mine, TY).

Without the Bible, we could not know the mind of God, His plan for our salvation, nor the way to eternal life in heaven through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:10-13; John 14:6). We would be tossed about on a terrible sea of sin, without guidance, without salvation, without meaning, without purpose, without hope, headed for everlasting doom. What would the world be like, what would your life and mine be like—how dark, dreary and desperate—if the Bible had never been written? We shudder to think.

The Bible has been written, and it shall never pass away (Matt. 24:35). Kingdoms come and go, and the world

will pass away, “But the word of the Lord abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:25). Thank God for His eternal, life-giving Word.

Endnotes

1 Robert G. Ingersoll, “The Gods,” 1872.

2 **National Review**, May 23, 2005, p. 8. See also <http://www.christianresponse.org/articles/159/saudi-police-arrest-40-pakistani-christians>.

3 Jim Brown, “Mom Sues After Bible Reading Barred At Her Child’s School,” <http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/5/62005c.asp> (Agape Press, May 6, 2005).

4 Allie Martin & Jody Brown, “Liberty Counsel Clears Way for ‘Jesus’ in Valedictorian’s Address,” <http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/5/272005a.asp> (Agape Press, May 27, 2005).

5 Alliance Defense Fund, <http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/news/stoy.aspx?cid=3420>.

6 Repent America, <http://www.repentamerica.com/hatespeech.html>.

7 Art Moore, “Bible Verses Regarded As Hate Literature,” http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=31080 (February 18, 2003).

8 Though the world dates time with reference to Christ, some “scholars” are working to replace the usage of B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (Latin *Anno Domini*, “In the year of the Lord”) with B.C.E. (before common era) and C.E. (common era). This is a typical example of the efforts of those who want to expunge acknowledgment of Christ from culture.

9 I am using the term “Christianity” in this context, not exclusively of the true church of Christ, but only in the popular sense of those who profess to believe in Christ in all of the various Protestant and Catholic sects. By including denominations in the scope of “Christianity” in this context, I am not intending to suggest that there are faithful Christians in denominations, in the strict, Biblical sense of the word “Christian.”

10 D. James Kennedy & Jerry Newcombe, **What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), pp. 3-4.

10 As cited by Ibid, p. 31.

11 As cited by Ibid, p. 82.

12 Ibid, p. 88.

13 Katha Pollitt, cited in the **AFA Journal** (March 2005), p. 15.

14 Public Law 97-280, 97th Congress, S.J. Res. 165, 96 Stat. 1211 (October 4, 1982).

15 <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/20383b.htm>

16 Kenneth L. Woodward with David Gates, "How The Bible Made America," **Newsweek** (December 27, 1982), p. 44, as cited by D. James Kennedy & Jerry Newcombe, **What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 78.

17 Kennedy & Newcombe, **What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?**, p. 7.

CHAPTER 26

Why Should I Believe In The Miracles Of The Bible?

Bill Burk

Introduction

THE BIBLE, BY EXAMPLE, implication and direct statement, teaches the need for the follower of Jesus to defend the Christian system. The apostle Paul, to the saints at Philippi, said, "I am appointed for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17).¹ Peter, writing to the pilgrims of the dispersion, urged them to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Also, we are reminded of Jude, the half-brother of the Lord, who urged those to whom he wrote "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

No matter the particular Bible concept, the follower of Jesus must be ready to defend the Truth on the subject. Such is true regarding the miracles of Scripture. **Why should I believe in the miracles of the Bible?** This is the question we will explore in this treatise.

The Bible: A Book Of Miracles

The Bible is a supernatural book which records the supernatural acts of a miracle working God. It has

been said that “miracles spatter the pages of the Bible like polka dots on a Dalmatian.”² If miracles are both implausible and impossible then the Bible falls.

Although Christianity is a historical religion, resting on a foundation of verifiable fact, it nevertheless recounts numerous supernatural events. For this reason, the answer to the question of whether Bible miracles are true alone determines the authenticity of the Christian faith. Why? Because the dual miracles of the incarnation and the resurrections of Jesus Christ encompass the entire fabric of Christianity. If these two unparalleled miracles did not occur, Christianity crumbles.³

The Psalmist stated, “You are the God who does wonders” (Psm. 77:14). Certainly, if the Scriptures are an accurate witness, such is true. The honest hearted Bible student cannot help but to marvel at the Creation account (Gen. 1), the sculpting of man from the dust of the ground and the formation of the woman (Gen. 2:7; Gen. 2:18-25), the Ten Plagues brought upon Egypt (Exod. 7-11), the ministries of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 13), the miracles of Jesus (Matt.-John), the miracles performed by the apostles (Acts) along with the miraculous gifts bestowed upon the infant church through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12-14). One cannot accept the truthfulness of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and, at the same time, deny the validity of the supernatural events therein. For the purpose of refining this study, let us take time to consider...

Miracles: Definition, Categories, Purpose And Duration

Webster defines the word “miracle” in a couple of different ways. First, the term is defined as “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in

human affairs.” Second, the same source declares that a miracle is “an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment.”⁴ Typically, it is the second definition that is embraced by most that tend to ascribe the miraculous to the most natural of events.

1. “The birth of our child was truly a miracle.”
2. “The fact that our team won in the last twenty seconds of the game was nothing short of a miracle.”
3. “That he was able to walk away from the wreckage without a scrape can only be contributed to the miraculous.”
4. “You being here has to be the miraculous working of God.”
5. “Have you read Gordon W. Prange’s book, **Miracle at Midway?**”

Far too often both those in and out of the church loosely throw around the term “miracle” to describe everything from Jesus walking on the water to finding the car keys they lost earlier in the week. However, what the Bible refers to as miracles is not so free. Here are several definitions that more accurately define the miracles of the Scriptures.

We are defining miracles as special acts of God in the world.⁵

A Miracle is an event that defies natural laws and that cannot be accounted for only by a supernatural explanation.⁶

A biblical miracle is a willful act of God, explainable only by His existence and power, and it has three specific ingredients: (1) it appears to either intervene or facilitate the normal sequence of natural laws through which God governs the universe; (2) it appears to either intervene or facilitate the normal sequence of natural laws through which God governs the universe; and (3) it is done for the purpose of executing a divine act, validating a religious truth, or illustrating a religious principle.⁷

An interference with Nature by supernatural power.⁸

A miracle is the divine operation that transcends what is normally perceived as natural law; it cannot be explained upon any natural basis.⁹

To sum up, miracles describe the intervention of the supernatural God into the natural world. Brother Wayne Jackson categorizes them as follows:¹⁰

First, there are supernatural acts of creation. Certain creation activities were accomplished by the word of God (Hebrews 11:3); He merely spoke, and it was done (Psalms 33:9). Obviously, this type of divine action is not being duplicated today since the creation process of the material universe was concluded at the end of the initial week of earth's history (Genesis 2:1-2).

Second, there were miracles which involved a temporary and localized suspension of laws regulating nature. Jesus calmed a ferocious storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27), and, on another occasion, He walked upon the waters of the lake (John 6:16-21).

Third, there were signs which involved the healing of man's physical body. The blind were made to see (John 9:1-7), and the lame to walk (Acts 3:1-10).

Fourth, there were signs demonstrating divine power over death. Lazarus, dead four days, was raised (John 11:43-44), and, of course, the resurrection of Christ is the very foundation of the Christian system (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

Fifth, some of the wonders of the New Testament age had to do with the expulsion of demons that had entered into human bodies (Matthew 12:22ff). This was evidence of the fact that the Savior's power was superior to that of Satan.

Sixth, the exhibition of divine authority was seen in the manipulation of certain material things. Christ turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), and

multiplied a lad's loaves and fishes, so that thousands were fed (John 6:1-14).

Seventh, miraculous power was demonstrated in both the plant and animal kingdoms. Balaam's donkey spoke with a man's voice (Num. 22:28), and the Lord Jesus, in an object lesson relative to the impending destruction of Jerusalem, destroyed a fig tree with but a word from His mouth (Matt. 21:19).

In this study, we will limit ourselves mostly to a consideration of miracles recorded in the New Testament record.

It is apparent that the miracles, signs and wonders of Scripture are unlike what most typically refer to as "miracles." The miracles of Scripture were amazing, awe-producing and undeniable. They were done with God's particular purpose in mind. Regarding the purpose of miracles in the Scriptures we concur with the following:

They [miracles, BB] are related to the divine purpose. Actually, four periods in biblical history are especially characterized by them: the days of (1) Moses and Joshua, (2) Elijah and Elisha, (3) Daniel, and (4) Christ and the early church. In each case, miracles serve to accredit the message and the messenger of God in critical stages of the Hebrew-Christian tradition.¹¹

God worked miracles in the past for the purpose of authenticating both His message and His messenger. The Hebrews writer summed it up this way:

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,

and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will (Heb. 2:1-4)?

With the completion of God's revelation to man, and the confirmation thereof, the age of miracles ceased. Once the purpose of them was fulfilled—the revealing of the mind of God and authentication of the revelation, supernatural manifestations became no longer necessary (cf. Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 13:8-10). To believe that miraculous gifts have ceased is not to take the position that God cannot work miracles if He so chooses, but that He determined their need, fulfilled their purpose and, since His revelation is complete, He no longer intervenes in such a way today. This, of course, does not in any way rule out His providential intervention in the world at present (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5-6, etc.). We believe in every miracle found in Scripture. However there are numerous ones who discount not only supposed modern-day miracles but the possibility of miracles ever being produced. With this thought mind we turn our attention to...

The Objections To Miracles

No God, No Miracles

With the society in which we live becoming more secular, humanistic and atheistic, more and more have begun to doubt the validity of Biblical miracles. If there is no supernatural God, then there can be no supernatural acts.

For most people, the main reason they do not believe in miracles is because they do not believe that God exists. A person who believes that the Universe and all living things evolved through natural processes cannot believe in miracles, because he or she thinks that nothing exists

except “nature.” Since a miracle is an event that has a **supernatural** explanation, no such event ever could occur in a world where only natural forces operate. Once a person denies the greatest miracle of all—creation at the hand of God—then he or she is forced to deny that miracles of any kind can occur.¹²

So, miracles, to the atheist, are not possible in light of the fact that in his mind God does not exist. As the late, Cornell University Professor Carl Sagan said, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”¹³ Therefore, since there is nothing but the natural universe, there can be no supernatural workings of a supernatural being.

No Violation Of Natural Laws

Some believe, as was the case with Carl Sagan, that the natural laws of the universe are all that exist.

Another idea suggests that God did, in fact create the Universe, but that His activities stopped at creation. Afterwards, He no longer intervened in this world through miracles, because that would break the natural laws that He had established at the time of creation.¹⁴

Regarding this view, whether God was ever involved in the process or not, all that is left are natural processes. Therefore, the person who holds this view is often referred to as a “naturalist” or a proponent of “naturalism.” Consider the following explanation of naturalism:

What the Naturalist believes is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can’t go behind, is a vast process in space and time which is going on of its own accord. Inside that total system every particular event (such as your sitting reading this book) happens because some other event has happened; in the long run, because the Total Event is happening. Each particular thing (such

as this page) is what it is because other things are what they are; and so, eventually, because the whole system is what it is. All the things and events are so completely interlocked that no one of them can claim the slightest independence from “the whole show.” None of them exists “on its own” or “goes on of its own” except in the sense that it exhibits at some particular place and time, that the general “existence on its own” or “behavior of its own accord” which belongs to “Nature,” the great total interlocked event as a whole.¹⁵

Ronald Nash explains it this way:

For a naturalist, the universe is a sealed box. Everything that happens inside the box (the natural order) is caused by or is explicable in terms of other things that exist within the box. Nothing, including God, exists outside the box; therefore, nothing outside the box that we call the universe or nature can have any causal effect within the box...The box is closed and sealed tightly. Even if something did exist outside the box, it could not serve as the cause of any event that occurs within the box.¹⁶

Since, to the naturalist, the universe is a tightly sealed box, nothing then would be able to tamper with the items in the box, or with the laws found within nature. Miracles, since they rest on the idea that God tampers with the laws of nature, are impossible. We might use the following to break down the argument that the naturalist might use:

1. Miracles are violations of natural laws
2. Natural laws are immutable
3. It is impossible for immutable laws to be violated
4. Therefore miracles are not possible.¹⁷

No Probability, No Way

David Hume was a Scottish philosopher that lived from 1711 to 1776. He was an agnostic who concluded that

there was insufficient evidence for confident belief in God. It was in 1748 that Hume put out his famous work, **Essays Concerning Human Understanding**. One of the chapters in the book is entitled, “**Of Miracles.**” Although only twenty plus pages, the argument that he set forth has become perhaps the most influential ever made against the miracles of the Bible. Hume’s argument can be broken down as follows:

1. A miracle is a violation of natural laws.
2. Firm and unalterable experience has established these laws.
3. A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence.
4. Therefore, a uniform experience amounts to a proof; there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle.¹⁸

Hume’s basic argument is that miracles are contrary to human experience. Thus, they cannot occur. In Hume’s mind, since miracles like walking on water, raising the dead, healing the sick and miraculously feeding the multitudes were not the norm, they just could not take place. Probability dictates truthfulness. Since no one is experiencing miracles, miracles are not probable (and thus, to Hume, impossible). Others have set forth slightly different variations of the same argument but the original still remains the most influential.¹⁹

Objections Answered

God Exists: Therefore Miracles Are Possible²⁰

While it is impossible to empirically prove that God exists there are other channels of proof that are just as convincing. A *prima facie* case for the existence of God may be set forth. *Prima facie* is Latin for “at first view.” Such a case involves “evidence that is sufficient to raise a presumption of fact or to establish the fact in question

unless rebutted.”²¹ Unless such evidence can be refuted it legally stands as fact. A strong, irrefutable *prima facie* case for God can be made.

The religious nature of man is evidence for the existence of God. “The religious faculty is universally and peculiarly a human trait.”²² The idea is that since man is a rational, thinking being it is impossible for a phenomenon as universal as the concept of God to be merely an illusion.

Anthropological research has indicated that among the farthest and most remote primitive people today, there is a universal belief in God. And in the earliest histories and legends of people all around the world, the original concept was of one God, who was the Creator. An original high God seems once to have been in their consciousness even in those societies which are today polytheistic.²³

The law of cause and effect serves as evidence for the existence of God. The writer of the Hebrews letter wrote, “For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4). The universe exists as an effect. Every effect must have a cause. The Ultimate First Cause is God.

The universe consists of a series of events stretched across time in a long causal chain. Each one of these events is the cause of the event that comes after it, and the effect of the event that comes before it. The world as it is came from the world as it was, which came from the world as it was before.

If we trace this series of events back in time, then what do we find? There seem, at first glance, to be two possibilities: either we eventually reach the first event in the series, the cause at the beginning of the universe that set everything going, or there is no first event in the series and the past stretches back into infinity.

The first cause argument tells us that the second of these is not possible, that the past cannot stretch back into infinity but rather must have a beginning. The argument then proceeds by suggesting that if the universe has a beginning then there must be something outside it that brought it into existence.

This being outside the universe, this Creator, the first cause argument tells us, is God.²⁴

The argument for design serves as evidence for the reality of God. The design argument is based upon order, arrangement and design. If the universe implies design then there must have been a Designer.

A deduction is commonly made that order and useful arrangement in a system suggest intelligence and purpose on the part of the originating cause. Now the universe, from the vastness of multiplied solar systems to the tiny world of molecules, evidences marvelous design and purposeful arrangement. The only conclusion that a reasonable, unbiased mind can reach is that the existing systems of the world were purposefully designed by an Intelligent Cause.²⁵

The moral argument serves as evidence that God is. "There exists within all men an ultimate recognition of a moral code to which rational persons are responsible. From the smuggest atheist to the most illiterate savage, this fact is apparent."²⁶

The moral argument appeals to the existence of moral laws as evidence of God's existence. According to this argument, there couldn't be such a thing as morality without God; to use the words that Sartre attributed to Dostoyevsky, "If there is no God, then everything is permissible." That there are moral laws, then, that not everything is impermissible, proves that God exists.²⁷

Since there are moral laws universally, it must be deduced that there is a universal Law-Giver who has written His laws both on stone and on hearts (Rom. 2:14-15). Mankind possesses, to a greater or lesser degree, a sense of moral “oughtness” that can only be attributed to God.

The evidence strongly points to the existence of God, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, Who, by His power and might created the universe and all that is therein (Gen. 1-2). Therefore, if the supernatural God of heaven exists, then the possibility of supernatural acts becomes a reality as well.

God Is Not Bound By Natural Laws

The naturalist likens the universe to a tightly sealed box. Nothing outside the box may tamper with that which is within it. In other words, the universe is a tightly sealed system of natural laws that are immutable and sacrosanct. However, the naturalist merely assumes that the laws of the universe are unalterable. One scientist makes this crucial observation:

Natural laws do not apply to God since He is not a natural being. The laws of nature cannot be “broken.” For instance, the First Law of Thermodynamics states that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed **in nature**. The two words “in nature” are critically important if the statement of the law is to be worded correctly. Nothing **in nature** can break this law. But since God is not part of nature, such a law does not apply to Him.

To illustrate, think of the Universe as one large room. God established natural laws that apply to everything in that room, and then He locked the door. It is impossible for matter or energy to be created, or destroyed, in that room. Now, suppose God were to unlock the door and put another chair in the room (or take a chair out of

the room). Did God then “break” the law He established in the room? No, He did not, since everything in the room (Universe) still functions according to natural laws, but since God is outside of the room, those laws do not apply to Him.²⁸

The truth of the matter is that, since God is not bound by natural law, He may, as the Law-Giver, do with and within it as He sees fit. Therefore, should He choose to supernaturally intervene in the world, it is perfectly within His right. Thus, miracles are possible despite natural law.

Probability Does Not Rule Out Possibility

This brings us back to the argument made by the eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume. Hume thought that uniform experience ruled out the possibility of miracles.

According to Hume, the universe functions by unchanging natural laws. We know these laws are “firm and unalterable” because they are established by consistent human experience. No one has ever seen natural laws violated. This “uniform experience amounts to proof” that miracles cannot exist (e.g., that a dead man cannot rise from the grave). Why? Because the relative probability of a miracle occurring, in light of this uniform experience, is so low as to be virtually impossible. Therefore if anyone claims to have observed a miracle, it is highly probable that he is mistaken because the evidence against an alleged miracle will always outweigh the evidence supporting it.²⁹

Despite Hume’s best efforts his reasoning was faulty. First, he argued in a circle. C. S. Lewis stated, “We know the experience of against [miracles] to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.”³⁰

Second, Hume's argument is based on his belief that the laws of nature are unalterable. However, as we have already noted, God is not subject to the laws of nature in that He is the Law-Giver and supernatural in character. Also, we might add, many scientists have come to reject the concept that natural laws are immutable.

The quantum theory has revealed, at least in the subatomic world, an unpredictable universe that is not responsive to alleged immutable natural laws. What science now holds is that natural laws describe the way nature generally behaves; they do not prescribe how nature must behave.³¹

Third, Hume believed it was impossible to prove that God exists. As we have seen, the evidence for the existence of God is overwhelming. Still, Hume did not accept such evidence as being substantial. Therefore, Hume was left with no other ways of explaining events than by natural means. Thus, his whole argument started out on the wrong foot.

Fourth, the argument of Hume presupposes that any historical evidence for the miraculous is erroneous. Anyone claiming to have witnessed the miraculous, in Hume's opinion, would be mistaken. Hume taught that "a wise man always proportions his belief to the evidence." For Hume, greater evidence was that which is "repeated more often." Hume would have reasoned that everyone dies, there have only been a few reports of the dead rising, and therefore any account of a resurrection is false. Geisler and Brooks used the same logic regarding card playing:

The odds of being dealt a perfect bridge hand (which has happened) are 1,635,013,559,600 to 1. But according to Hume, if you get it, you better fold your hand and ask for a redeal because you should never believe that such an outrageous thing could happen.³²

Just because something may be considered highly improbable does not make it impossible. Therefore, despite the fact that miracles are rare, that does not make them impossible or implausible.

Fifth, Hume's argument is based on his view of the uniformity of human experience. However, possibility is not based on uniformity. "Experience can tell us what **normally** happens in nature but it cannot tell us with absolute certainty what **will** happen."³³ Even if no one living has ever witnessed a miracle, that does not determine whether miracles are possible or not.

Conclusion

Why should I believe in the miracles of the Bible? Consider the following:

1. The Supernatural God exists.
2. Being the great Law-Giver, and a supernatural Being, He is not bound by the laws of nature; therefore He may suspend them at any time for His purposes.
3. Thus, miracles are possible.
4. The Bible, which claims to be the revelation of the supernatural God, may be trusted because of the various proofs that demonstrate its inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-17).³⁴
5. The miracles therefore recorded in the Holy Scriptures may confidently be believed. In truth, there is no good evidence to reject them.

Endnotes

1 All Scripture references are taken from the **New King James Version Bible** unless otherwise indicated.

2 Kyle Butt, M.A., "Is It A Miracle?" From the website: www.apologeticspress.org

3 Dan Story, **Defending Your Faith** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992) p. 151.

4 Merriam – Webster Online

5 Josh McDowell, **The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) p. 662.

6 Butt.

- 7 Story, p. 152.
- 8 C. S. Lewis, **Miracles** (San Francisco: Zondervan, 1947) p. 5.
- 9 Wayne Jackson, **Miracles**, www.christiancourier.com/archives/miracles.html
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Howard F. Vos, **Can I Really Believe?**, (USA: World, 1995) pp. 75-76.
- 12 Bert Thompson, **Anti-Supernaturalism and Biblical Miracles**, www.apologeticspress.org
- 13 Carl Sagan, **Cosmos** (New York: Random House, 1980) p. 4.
- 14 Butt.
- 15 Lewis, pp. 7-8.
- 16 Ronald H. Nash, **Life's Ultimate Questions** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) pp. 38-39.
- 17 N. L. Geisler, & R. M. Brooks, 1990. **When Skeptics Ask**. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill., electronic edition. The argumentation is from Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) who was one of the modern rationalist philosophers. Rationalism believed that all truth could be deduced from self-evident principles without examining factual evidence. Spinoza's background was Jewish, but he was expelled from the synagogue at age twenty-four for his unusual views. He was convinced that there could only be one infinite substance and nothing else, so he concluded that God is the universe (pantheism). Natural laws, then, were the laws of God. Given this starting point, miracles are automatically eliminated. If the supernatural is identical to nature, then there is nothing beyond nature to intervene. Anything beyond nature must be greater than God, and that is absurd.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Geisler & Brooks also set forth the arguments of philosophers Patrick Nowell-Smith and Antony Flew. Both use variations of Hume's original argument in stating their cases against miracles, pp. 80-84.
- 20 The following arguments are a summary of those found in Wayne Jackson's, **Fortify Your Faith** (Montgomery: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1974) pp. 12-23.
- 21 www.lectlaw.com
- 22 Jackson, p. 14.
- 23 Paul E. Little, **Know Why You Believe** (Victor Books, 1988), p. 22.
- 24 www.existence-of-god.com/first-cause-argument.html
- 25 Jackson, pp. 17-18.
- 26 Ibid., p. 20.

27 www.existence-of-god.com/moral-argument.html

28 Thompson.

29 Story, p. 157.

30 Lewis, p. 162.

31 Story, p. 159.

32 N. L. Geisler, & R. M. Brooks, electronic edition.

33 Story p. 158.

34 The purpose of this manuscript is not to prove the inspiration of the Scriptures. Such will be covered in other manuscripts contained in this book. However, with confidence we say that because of the Bible's amazing unity, predictive prophecy, scientific foreknowledge, indestructibility, amazing preservation, etc. we believe it to be the very Word of God.

CHAPTER 27

Why Should I Believe That The Bible Is Absolute Truth?

Bobby Liddell

Appreciation

REVERELED TRUTH ENABLES US to know right from wrong (what is right and what is wrong, as well as who is right and who is wrong), makes possible our salvation in Jesus, unites us with all the faithful as brethren in Christ, and gives us hope of eternal life. I thank God that I can work together with the great Southaven congregation, and do so correctly as a result of the benefits and blessings of the Truth, in this lectureship on: **Why Should I Believe The Bible?**

Among churches of the recent past and the present, few shine as does this congregation of God's people. The reasons are the Southaven congregation has: (1) an eldership which has consistently upheld the Truth; (2) preachers who have lovingly preached the Truth; and, (3) members who have stood foursquare for the Truth. May it ever be so!

What a joy it is, always, to have even a small part in the work of this church; thereby, to know the blessings of fellowship, and to be encouraged to greater service by their

sterling example. May God's richest blessings continue upon the good and great Southaven church of Christ is our prayer.

Introduction

Before we can consider the question of our topic, we must address some preliminary points.

1. Either there is truth, or there is not. We affirm that truth exists—there is truth.

2. If truth exists, either truth is knowable, or it is not. We affirm that truth is knowable. We can know the truth.

3. If truth exists and is knowable; then, the question arises as to whether truth is absolute, or relative. We affirm that absolute truth exists.

4. Thus, we begin from the position of affirming the existence of absolute truth which man can know.

These foregoing logical syllogisms are the bases for our study of the reason(s) for believing the Bible is absolute Truth.

What Is Truth?

“Pilate saith unto him [Jesus], What is truth?” (John 18:38). “What is truth?” is a good question, and one which we must ask. Philosophers ask, “What is truth?” The simple, common man asks, “What is truth?” The agnostic (who claims we cannot know), and the skeptic (who claims we do not know, but must doubt) ask “What is truth?”

What is truth? Truth is not an assertion, nor an assumption. Truth is, by definition, a fact, a reality.¹ Young wrote that truth is: “Variously defined according to one's world-view.”² One's “world-view” determines how he “sees” truth, and what he defines “truth” to be. John C. Collins said: “Truth is the object of philosophy, but not always of philosophers.”³ Many philosophers view the idea of Biblical

Truth as too simplistic, and regard religion as superstition, based on ignorance, furthered by mental lethargy, and expressed by blind “faith” which neither thinks nor questions.

Blackburn stated:

Beliefs are supposed to be true.... And religious people apparently believe various things, which other people do not believe. But it is not actually obvious that religion is a matter of truth, or that religious states of mind are to be assessed in terms of truth and falsity.⁴

It seems philosophy (worldly philosophy), although asking important questions, fails to seek the right source for the equally important answers. Instead of going to God (that is, to the Bible, the absolute Truth from God, by which God speaks to man today [Heb. 1:1-3]), philosophy goes to man. “The way of man is not in himself” (Jer. 10:23), but God has revealed His inspired Word in order that man might know the way whereby he can be perfect (complete, lacking nothing), and be furnished through and through to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Concerning “Revelation,” Young penned:

Special revelation must also be included among the criteria of truth, for it is the means relied upon to obtain truth of a specific kind in the Christian realistic world-view. Of course, if we happen to be living in a naturalistic world, the idea of special revelation is superfluous. The possibility of revelation is always dependent on the existence of God. If we are living in an idealistic world, the idea of special revelation is unnecessary since it is possible for men to obtain a sufficient knowledge of God and His purposes by means of experience. If we are living in a Christian realistic world, special revelation is absolutely essential.⁵

While worldly philosophy and true religion are incompatible, Christians should not fear philosophy.

Rather, God's people should so equip themselves to recognize and utilize true philosophy, and to expose the worldly philosophy which denies or contradicts the Truth (or, at its very best, compromises it), and destroys the faith of the uninformed, weak, and unsuspecting (cf. Col. 2:8-9).

Still, philosophers, and religionists alike, search for truth, and for truth's relationship to the proper role of man. Both acknowledge their pursuit for the solution of finding happiness for man. "What is the source of that knowledge?" becomes the great question. The knowledge of what God provides for man, and requires of man, is the foundation for man's real happiness now and eternally (Phil. 4:4; Matt. 5:12; John 10:10; Rev. 14:13). Nothing else—but God's Truth—will suffice.

Does The Requirement Of Faith Negate The Existence Of Knowledge?

Roy Deaver accurately noted the relationship of faith and knowledge:

We stress again that "faith"—in the Bible sense of the word—**means taking God at His word**. There is no Biblical faith where there is no testimony from God. Faith does not mean absence of evidence. In fact, faith requires evidence, and there can be no faith where there is no evidence. God expects us to be concerned about evidence. The very existence of the Bible presupposes the need for evidence. John said: "...but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Neither does faith mean the absence of knowledge. It should be shouted from the housetops that Biblically approved faith does not rule out knowing. Paul said: "Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord..." (2 Cor. 5:6). How did Paul know? "For

we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Here is knowledge which is the product of faith. Many of Samaria who believed on the Lord said to the woman: “Now we **believe**, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and **know** that this is indeed the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). These said, “We believe” and “We know.” Faith does not preclude knowledge and knowledge does not preclude faith. Peter said to the Lord: “And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God” (John 6:69). (In the Greek New Testament both these verbs [“believed” and “know”] are perfect tense verbs. The force of this fact is, Peter literally says: “We have believed, we now believe, and we will continue to believe; we have known, we now know, and we will continue to know.” The believing and the knowing are co-extensive.) Paul said: “...I have known whom I have believed...” (2 Tim. 1:12).⁶

Does Absolute Truth Exist?

Allan Bloom, in **The Closing of the American Mind**, wrote of the programming of our young people to accept that truth is only relative.

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students’ reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question $2 + 2 = 4$. These are things you don’t think about. The students’ backgrounds are as various as America can provide. Some are religious, some atheists; some are to the Left, some to the Right; some intend to be scientists, some humanists, or professionals, or businessmen; some are poor, some rich. They are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality. And the two are related in a moral intention. The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight but a moral postulate,

the condition of a free society, or so they see it. They have all been equipped with this framework early on, and it is the modern replacement for the inalienable natural rights that used to be the traditional American grounds for a free society. That it is a moral issue for students is revealed by the character of their response when challenged—a combination of disbelief and indignation: “Are you an absolutist?,” the only alternative they know, uttered in the same tone as “Are you a monarchist?” or “Do you really believe in witches?” This latter leads into the indignation, for someone who believes in witches might well be a witchhunter or a Salem judge. The danger they have been taught to fear from absolutism is not error but intolerance.⁷

Notice, especially, this statement of Bloom: “The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight but a moral postulate, the condition of a free society, or so they see it.”⁸

The affirmation that absolute truth does not exist is self-contradictory, for it is a claim **to know the absolute truth** that absolute truth does not exist. If absolute truth does not exist, there is no need to pursue this matter further, or to pursue any other matter, as far as that goes. If truth exists, but is not knowable, the existence of truth would have no benefit and no impact upon man, nor could truth be determined so to be. If all truth is only relative (changeable, situational, subjective); that is, if absolute truth does not exist, obviously, the Bible is **NOT** absolute truth, and we labor in vain with this topic.

Robert Camp accurately described the dilemma of those who deny the existence of absolute truth:

When the skeptic states his position, “Nothing can be absolutely known,” it first appears to be a profound, universal principle. Yet, in the end, it dissolves into the admission that this particular skeptic is not **AT THIS TIME** sure of anything. **The moment he tries to make it universal**

and absolute, he is violating his own rule

[emph. mine, BL]. Thus, the sequence becomes:
INITIAL STAND: Nothing can be known absolutely by anyone.

FIRST RETREAT: We cannot know that nothing is known but even if we know something we cannot be certain that we know it.

SECOND RETREAT: I cannot be certain that others cannot be certain; I only know that I am not certain that I know anything.⁹

A key consideration in evaluating the assertion that absolute truth does not exist (and what could be a driving force behind this assertion) is that many people in our modern world would be absolutely pleased if there were no absolute truth (cf. Jer. 17:23; John 3:19-21). If absolute truth does not exist, or if existing knowable truth (not just assertion or “belief”) is **only relative**, then it **MUST** follow that there is no absolute standard of authority, no absolute measure of right and wrong, no absolute certainty, no hope, and no security, but only confusion and doubt, or baseless assumptions, guesses, and speculations, and there can be no true, accurate, valid condemnation or commendation of the thoughts, words, or deeds of man.

One way of living would be just as good as another (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). There would be **NO** wrong way to live, and there would be no right way to live, for there would be no absolute standard by which to judge (cf. Judg. 21:25). None could declare beliefs and actions right, for how could one know? There would be no real, true hope for eternity (cf. Tit. 1:2). Desire and expectation comprise hope. How could one know what to desire? How could one determine what to expect? There would be no sure way to heaven (John 14:6). One might go one way, or he might go another—or, there might not be a heaven to which to go, or there might not be a way to know how to get there! Friends, without the certainty of the Bible’s being absolute Truth, there would be no certainty of hope, or of heaven.

“Someone has said that we live in a strange world where the relativity of Einstein is considered absolute, and the absolutes of the Bible are considered relative.”¹⁰ Remember, just because men **reject** absolute truth to embrace atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, or any other “ism,” whether for their convenience, for their indulgence, or for the salving of their consciences, does not **prove** that absolute truth does not exist.

The Law Of Identity

Thomas B. Warren wrote concerning the Law of Identity:

1. The Law Of Identity.

(1) **For things.** The law of identity for **things** is: if a thing has a certain property, then it has it.

(2) **For propositions.** The law of identity for **propositions** is: if a proposition is true, then it is true. This means that if a proposition is true, then it is true for all persons, in all times, and in all places....

(3) **Discussion of the significance of this law for the spread of truth.** This law says, in effect, that if a proposition is true for one person, then it is true for another person; it is impossible for a proposition to be **true** for one person and **false** for another person.¹¹

Therefore, something cannot both **be** truth and **not be** truth at the same time. For example, it cannot both **be true** that $2 + 2 = 4$, and **not be true** that $2 + 2 = 4$. Does $2 + 2 = 4$? Absolutely, for all places, all people, all the time. Absolute truth exists, and **cannot** both be relative and absolute at the same time.

Can We Know Truth?

Because truth is absolute, there is certainty (cf. Luke 1:1-4). We do not have to wonder, or live in doubt. We can know the Truth—and we can **know** that we know the

Truth (as we can know that we know God). Anthony Flew, in **Thinking Straight**, said this about our ability to know:

To say that someone knows something is to say more than that he claims to know it, or that he believes it most strongly. It is to say also, both that it is true, and that he is in a position to know. So neither the sincerity of his conviction nor the ingenuousness of his utterance guarantees that he knew.¹²

If we can know anything, we can know truth, and we can know that the Bible is Truth. Paul, by inspiration, wrote of God, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Salvation depends upon knowing Truth, and the possibility of coming to know the Truth is absolutely necessary if one would be saved.

Thomas B. Warren wrote:

If we cannot **know** that God exists, then we cannot **know** that the Bible is **His** word. If we cannot **know** that the Bible is His word, then we cannot **know** that Jesus is the Son of God and has been raised from the dead. If we cannot **know** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has been raised from the dead, then our faith (as Christians) is in vain (1 Cor. 15:12-17). Peter made clear that we **can** know these matters to be true (Acts 2:22-36). But to hold that men **cannot know** that God exists is to imply the falsity of the claim to know that Jesus Christ is the resurrected Son of God! And, any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is itself false!¹³

How can we know anything? We can know by experience (through the physical senses), or by evidence (by correct reasoning; that is, by reflective consideration of the facts of the evidence). Knowledge may come by experience, but also by evidence which warrants correct conclusions. By correct reasoning, we can know the conclusion is true, and know that we know.

We Can Know God Exists

The evidence demands the correct conclusion of knowledge that God is (cf. John 17:3; 1 John 2:3-4). In 1976, Anthony Flew (renowned atheist who, in 2004, claimed belief in “a God”¹⁴), in his debate with Thomas B. Warren, affirmed a universal negative: “I know that God does not exist.”¹⁵ Brother Warren proved that to **know** God does not exist, Flew would have to **know**, among other things, matter has always existed; that matter is all that exists; and, that life came from nonliving matter. These things Flew could **NOT KNOW**.¹⁶

God’s creation exists (but could not exist from dead matter), which evidences God’s existence as Creator (cf. Rom. 1:20; Psm. 19). Man’s existence demands the existence of a greater than man from which man came. Just as surely as design demands a designer, creation demands a Creator—and the existence of creation is proof of the existence of God as Creator (cf. Gen. 1-2). Yes, we can know God exists, and know that we know. If we cannot know God exists, how could we claim to know His revelation is absolute Truth?

God is the one, true, eternal Deity revealed by His material creation **and** His inspired revelation (Psm. 19), and His Word, which declares man’s origin, purpose, and destiny, is the “God breathed” (inspired—2 Tim. 3:16-17), Word of God (not man—1 Thess. 2:13), and is Truth (John 17:17). Through obedience to His Word, we can know Him (1 John 2:2-4), and have the relationship with Him which He desires for us (1 John 1:6-10; Eph. 1:3); thus, we can live the life, prescribed by the Truth, that brings the state of blessedness and promises the reward of eternity (Matt. 5).

Jesus said:

...To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (John 18:37).

Is Christ a reliable witness of the Truth? Is the Truth of which He bore witness reliable? Or, is the truthfulness of Christ and His message subject to situations, or to the subjective thinking of men, or is it limited to experience by the physical senses?

Can we know the Truth? Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Thus, there is something which Jesus identified as Truth. He stated it as something real and existing. Further, He said men could **know Truth**, and that the result would be freedom from being servants of sin (John 8:34-36).

Paul, by inspiration, wrote: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Paul declared there was something which men could know, and that knowable thing was/is Truth. The knowledge of Truth was/is attainable by men, and God (the source of **ALL** Truth) would that all men come unto such knowledge.

Why Should I Believe The Bible Is Absolute Truth?

Having determined what truth is, that absolute truth exists, and that we can know truth, let us consider why we should believe the Bible is absolute Truth.

Because God Is The Source Of Truth

Absolute truth must come from an absolute Source—God (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-13). God is the Source, for He is the God of Truth—the One from Whom Truth proceeds.

He is the Rock, his work **is** perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a **God of truth** and without iniquity, just and right **is** he (Deut. 32:4).

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD **God of truth** (Psm. 31:5).

That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the **God of truth**; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the **God of truth**; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes (Isa. 65:16).

The Source of Truth is God, not a man, not some group of men, not the church (the Roman Catholic Church's claim notwithstanding), and not the preacher (cf. Matt. 21:25; Matt. 15:9). Jesus said:

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (John 7:17).

Because Christ Is The Truth

Jesus Christ said of Himself: "I am the way, the **truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Christ, the pre-existent Word (John 1:1-4), took upon Himself "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9).

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and **truth** (John 1:14).

Christ taught the Truth, and bore witness unto it.

And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in **truth**, neither carest thou for any **man**: for thou regardest not the person of men (Matt. 22:16).

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the **truth**. Every one that is of the **truth** heareth my voice (John 18:37).

God is the source of Truth, and Christ is the Truth. In addition, I should believe the Bible is absolute Truth because of the Holy Spirit's relation to Truth.

Because The Holy Spirit Is The Spirit Of Truth

Jesus promised His apostles the blessing of the Spirit of Truth:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of **truth**, is come, he will guide you into all **truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26).

Even the Spirit of **truth**; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17).

The Holy Spirit is Truth:

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is **truth** (1 John 5:6).

From the Godhead (Matt. 28:19; Acts 17:29) proceeds Truth as God the Father is the Source of Truth, God the Son is Truth, and God the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. To man, God has spoken—through the Word of Truth.

Because The Bible Is The Word Of Truth

Jesus said:

And ye shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free (John 8:32).

Sanctify them through thy **truth**: thy word is **truth** (John 17:17).

The Bible is the Word of Truth:

Of his own will begat he us with the **word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (Jas. 1:18).

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the **word of truth** (2 Tim. 2:15).

For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the **word of the truth** of the gospel (Col. 1:5).

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the **truth** through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22).

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the **truth**, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:26).

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in **truth**, as we have received a commandment from the Father (2 John 4).

One should believe the Bible is absolute Truth because God is the Source of Truth, Christ is the Truth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, and the Bible is the Word of Truth.

Conclusion

Many deny that the Bible is absolute Truth, or, if it is, that we can know absolute Truth. They affirm that what one believes should not be bound on another, or what is truth to one may not be truth to another. The truth is that souls are in the balance and their destiny depends upon a correct understanding of the Truth of God's Word (cf. Eph.

3:2-7; Eph. 5:17; Psm. 119:11). The options are these: if we reject the Truth (God's Word), we will be lost, but if we believe and obey the Truth, we will be saved (1 Pet. 1:22).

Absolute truth exists, and the Bible, the revealed Word from the God of Truth, is absolute Truth. If the Bible is not absolute Truth, such passages as 2 Thessalonians 2:8-14 would have no meaning whatsoever. Notice the emphasized text (emph. mine, BL).

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.** But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to **salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel,** to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:8-14).

Thus, the Bible is the absolute standard. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Note: the Bible is the absolute Truth whether we like it, or not; whether we know it, or not; whether we believe it, or not; and, whether we obey it or not (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 1:16).

If the Bible is not absolute Truth: none could have saving faith, for faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17); none could have unity with others who have saving

faith (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-6); none could have real happiness in faith (Luke 11:27-28); and none could have real hope based upon that saving faith which is, itself, founded upon evidence (Tit. 1:2; Rom. 15:4; back to Rom. 10:17).

We KNOW that we will never convince some who “believe not.” In spite of all He said and did, even the Lord Jesus Christ could not convince some (John 1:11; John 3:12; John 5:38; John 7:5; John 8:24; John 10:37-38; John 17:20-21; John 20:30-31). He said:

And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? (John 8:45-46).

We must be ready to affirm and to defend Truth, and to expose and to oppose error. We must teach men the fundamental affirmation that the Bible is God’s Word, and by it, men can KNOW that Jesus is the Savior, and that through obedience to the will of God, men can KNOW they have salvation in Christ. It is not enough to know the Truth of God; we must also know the God of Truth. If the Bible is not absolute Truth, then men become the standard, and all religious questions may be correctly answered by any answer from anyone! Who could know otherwise?

Endnotes

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4 Simon Blackburn, **Think** (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 149-50.

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6 Roy Deaver, **Ascertaining Bible Authority** (Pensacola, FL: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1987), pp. 23-24.

7 Allan Bloom, **The Closing of the American Mind** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 25.

8 Ibid.

9 Robert Camp, "Do They Know That No One Knows?" **Rightly Dividing The Word**, Vol. 1, ed. Terry Hightower (Moore, OK: National Christian Press, 1993), p. 49.

10 Norman L. Geisler, **Christian Ethics** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), p. 13.

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14 <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=315976>.

15 **The Warren-Flew Debate on the Existence of God** (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1977), p. v.

16 Ibid, p. 57.

CHAPTER 28

Why Should I Believe In The All-Sufficiency Of The Bible?

Gary McDade

Challenge To Inspiration

THE LATE NINETEENTH AND early twentieth centuries saw the leading challenge to the Bible in the area of its Divine inspiration. The German Tübingen School in 1878¹ advanced the now famous Documentary Hypothesis (also known as the Graf-Wellhausen Theory) which advocated an evolutionary development of the Sacred writings based on naturalism to the decrying of supernaturalism, that is, the inspiration of God. The central idea which served as the basis for denying inspiration was that there were at least four writers called J, E, D, and P who wrote in different time periods with different emphases whose works were later edited (German: Redacted) about the time of Judean King Josiah's reform (621 B.C.) and all erroneously ascribed to Moses as author. The life's work of some of the most brilliant minds of the times yielded the exhilarating exoneration of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Benjamin B. Warfield, William Henry Green, and, within the brotherhood, the scholarly J. W. McGarvey, wrote such works as **The Inspiration and Authority of**

the Bible, Evidences of Christianity, Biblical Criticism, and The Authorship of Deuteronomy. Hall Laurie Calhoun, graduate of both prestigious Yale (having earned the Bachelor of Divinity degree) and Harvard, where “he was the first preacher among churches of Christ to have earned the Ph.D. degree prior to 1925,”² fought the takeover of the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky by the liberals, however, without success. The judgment of the esteemed historian J. E. Choate is that the loss of the College of the Bible to the liberal anti-inspirationists must not be ignored. He wrote, “To ignore the lessons of history carries its own penalties. Modernism is the same today, the same as in 1917 and much more.”³

Continuing Indictment

The opponents of the inspiration of the Bible are still around. The so-called “Jesus Seminar” which convenes once a year is evidence that there remain powerful voices yet to be silenced by well-informed, courageous defenders of the faith. A perennial lesson the Bible teaches is for the faithful ever to be vigilant (Matt. 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:8). Victory enjoyed along several fronts by one generation does not insure the next generation from encountering the same foes (Exod. 1:8; Num. 33:55-56; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). Yet, toward the close of the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century the challenge to the Scriptures’ inspiration seems to have been exceeded by the challenge to the all-sufficiency of the Bible. The monumental work of Philip Schaff, titled **The Creeds of Christendom**, in three volumes and 2,547 pages, reviews and critiques the creeds of men from the so-called Apostles’ Creed early on to the Protestant evangelical creeds which dominate the contemporary religious landscape and serve as the basis of faith for the more than three hundred-fifty different denominational churches today. The all-sufficiency of the

Bible is a concept most religious people today cannot comprehend much less accept.

Centering The Investigation

The objective at hand is to show in what sense the Bible is all-sufficient. The word “sufficient” means, “Enough to meet the needs of a situation or a proposed end.” Synonyms include, “Qualified, adequate, and competent.”⁴

The objective does **not** pertain to the **canon of Scripture**. That study involves determining which books of the myriads down through the ages singularly bear the marks of inspiration and belong in the Bible (Rom. 3:1-2; Rev. 22:18-19).

The objective does **not** deal with the field of **textual criticism**. That realm of study involves the integrity of the Bible, proving that the English text is the same as the original and that faithful copies have been handed down through the centuries (John 10:35; Matt. 5:18; Matt. 24:35).

The objective does **not** concern the **genuineness** of the Bible. That realm of study involves authorship, the demonstration that the men who are credited with writing the Bible actually did so (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 1:21).

The objective does **not** venture into **higher criticism**. That realm of study involves attention to the style, mode of thought, and particular expressions used, unveiling the setting and circumstances unique to each writer (Gal. 4:15; Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17).

The objective does **not** delve into **authenticity**. That realm of study involves the historical accuracy and truthfulness of the Bible (Isa. 45:1-4; Ezra 1:1-4; Dan. 2:36-44; Luke 3:1-2).

The objective does **not** relate to the **evidences** of the Christian religion. That study involves an examination of the innumerable proofs that verify the claims of the Bible to be true (Acts 14:17; Acts 17:22-31).

The objective does **not** deal with **infallibility**. That study considers the incapability of the Bible to present error (Job 9:3; Psm. 119:160; Luke 16:17).

The objective does **not** lend itself to the **immutability** of the Bible. That study emphasizes the unchangeable nature of the Bible (Psm. 119:89; Heb. 6:16-18; John 12:48).

The objective specifically does **not** deal with **relevance**. That study shows the timeless quality of the message of the Bible to provide instruction for godly living (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 20:12-15; 1 John 5:3).

The objective does **not** deal with the question of **unity**. That study affirms the oneness of the theme and message of the Bible carried throughout its sixty-six books and approximate 1600 year span of time covered in its writing by about forty different men (Deut. 32:7; Rev. 15:3-4).

The objective does not cover credibility. That study highlights the believability of the Bible (John 20:30-31; Acts 26:26).

The objective does **not** deal with **indestructibility**. That study affirms the enduring nature of the Bible (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

And, the objective does **not** deal with the **inspiration** of the Bible. That area of study focuses attention on the fact of the Divine origin of the Bible; its words from beginning to end are “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; John 6:63).

Closing In

In order to establish the sense in which the Bible is all-sufficient, first, the purpose or objective of the Bible must be established, for that which is not only sufficient but moreover all-sufficient entirely must satisfy the “needs of a situation or accomplish a proposed end.” Interestingly, the apostle Peter wrote of the “proposed end” of his life’s labors in revealing the Gospel, and not only did he have

in mind his work but that of all the prophets who taught and wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:10-12). He said, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:9). In this chapter, Peter emphasized the need for the Christians to whom he was writing, whom he addressed as "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," to maintain an obedient faith so they could receive "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). In the four short verses which bring the chapter to a close, Peter spoke of the Word of God as the Truth, the Seed, and the Gospel (cf. also John 17:17; Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:25). Peter wrote:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

Therefore, it does appear that under Divine guidance the apostle Peter strongly affirmed that the Word of God is all-sufficient for the purpose of conveying an obedient soul into an acceptable relationship with God, purifying that soul, and providing the means for that soul to endure.

Certain Impact

God stands behind His Word to back up its promises, validate its authority, and justify its claims. Isaiah affirmed that God's Word is all-sufficient to accomplish His aims:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:8-11).

The fact that the Word of God is able to accomplish the purposes of God implies that it is powerful. And, it was to that point that the writer of Hebrews spoke in chapter four at verse twelve:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

In a very broad sense, the same writer stated that God is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3).

Corinthian Instruction

The power of the Word of God is required to produce saving faith in the heart of the hearer. The apostle Paul wrote, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The Christians to whom Peter wrote were “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). Eternal truths upon which saving faith rests all, without one single exception, are found within the Word of God (Jas. 1:22-25). The word “sufficiency” is a key word in the present study. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote of the sufficiency of the Word of God as he and the other apostles were in process of delivering it to the world. He said:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (2 Cor. 3:5-8).

Since the apostles sufficiently were guided by God to produce the New Testament, then the product of their labors, the New Testament, must itself be sufficient for the purposes God had in mind. In fact, Paul's statement, "How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" points to the greater glory of the New Testament over the Old. The sufficiency of the New Testament receives heightened emphasis in that statement. So, the Bible is all-sufficient to accomplish the purpose of God for the human family, which is the salvation of souls for God's glory.

Central Initiative

Since the theme of the lectureship is "Why **Should I Believe The Bible?**" and every lecture deals with an aspect of how the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then the groundwork will now be laid that will apply to each lecture by focusing attention on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as the text which underlies all that will be built upon it throughout the lectureship. Interestingly, this is the text utilized to dispel and defeat the opponents of the inspiration of the Bible in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Today, it is the text which will crush the opponents of the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures who have arisen in great numbers toward the close of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. This classic text on the inspiration

of the Scriptures which lends itself to the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures reads:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Comprehensive Ingredients

The inspired (literally “God-breathed”) Scriptures are profitable for four things. Please, notice how comprehensive and inclusive these four things are: (1) **Doctrine**, meaning teaching.⁵ (2) **Reproof**, meaning to demonstrate wherein the error lies. (3) **Correction**, meaning to demonstrate restorative action. (4) **Instruction in righteousness**, meaning to exhibit guidance in godly living. These four ingredients in the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures have been commonly expressed as: **Doctrine**, showing what is right; **reproof**, showing what is wrong; **correction**, showing how to get right; and **instruction in righteousness**, showing how to stay right. The range and scope of spiritual supply included in this passage received acknowledgment from the inimitable N. B. Hardeman in a sermon he preached on the subject “The All-Sufficiency of the Scriptures”:

You cannot imagine any condition or need of mankind but one or the other of these statements will adequately apply. Their completeness is in the fact that the man of God may be perfect—not perfect in morals, not perfect in character, but perfect in this respect, namely, that he is thoroughly, completely, furnished unto every good work.

I wish that that text would register with all who may chance to hear or read what Paul said. The all-sufficiency, the absolute adequacy, and adaptability of the Bible to meet all the demands

of the human family are here emphasized. Christians believe that passage. They also believe that “his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” [2 Pet. 1:3]. We need once again to announce with all the power we can command that “the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our sole rule of faith and practice.”⁶

Brother Hardeman beautifully articulated what is meant by the all-sufficiency of the Bible, “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is our sole rule of faith and practice.”

Creeds Inadequate

Jesus prayed for unity based upon the Word of God for all who would be His disciples. Substantial Divine insight has been incorporated into the Bible which will make all men, people of every race, educational, social, and material background, one in Christ. This feature of the Bible stands as unassailable proof of its Divine origin. No other writing of men has been able to provide such a basis for unity. Creeds written by men limit the fellowship of all believers in Christ either by geographical boundaries, race distinctions, flawed organizational structures, mutilations of the sacred text, or the invention of alienating distinctions “(which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?” (Col. 2:22). Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20-21 is an affirmation of the unfaltering confidence He placed in the Word conveyed through the apostles to unite all believers. With equal strength the points He made implies the woeful inadequacy of the creeds of men. Jesus said:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

The acceptance of a creed, whether it be referenced as a catechism, manual, discipline, handbook, confession of faith, or mission statement, denies faith in the Scriptures, for if the Bible “thoroughly furnishes unto every good work,” then why have a supplementary book? Surely, those who develop and subscribe to these works are thereby suggesting that the Bible is at least just a little bit lacking in some important regard. It is not quite sufficient. God could have made it more useful by formulating pithy summary statements and bottom line contractions of his message. Unlike David who declared, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day,” modern men and women must make wiser use of their precious time by having their church leaders reduce “the unsearchable riches of Christ” down to something the size of a couple of coins which they may jingle in their pocket as a reminder of their acceptance of Christ. Again, Hardeman said:

God anticipated the requirements of man throughout all ages and his every need in His revelation to man. Therefore, the adoption of any other book contradicts any man’s saying: “I accept the Bible as a complete guide into all truth.”⁷

Creeds Illogical

The word “creed,” from Latin, occurring as the first word in the so-called Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed has come to mean, “A brief authoritative formula of religious belief,” but it does have a secondary meaning: “A set of fundamental beliefs.”⁸ Hardeman used this secondary meaning of creed once he had exposed creeds of men as illogical in his famed Tabernacle Sermons:

But I have been told by some who have thus gone aside that churches must write out their articles of faith. I think it well that such be written, but I just wonder if anyone means to say that he

has articles of faith not written in the Bible. And if they are written in the Bible, why the necessity of having them in another book? Others say: "We must have rules and regulations governing our church." I certainly think there ought to be such in every church. If any man has a church, I will agree that it ought to be regulated. I would, however, be ashamed of myself if I had some rules and regulations unknown to the Bible. That would destroy all of my claims that I accept God's Word as a complete lamp to my feet and a complete light unto my path. Now, let me ask any sane, sober man. If your creed contains more than this Bible, won't you admit that it might contain too much? Let me reverse it. If the creed you have adopted, and to which you have sworn allegiance, contains less than the Bible, won't you admit that it might contain too little? If, therefore, any creed adopted by any organization contains neither more nor less than does the Bible, then it is exactly like God's book, and since we have no need of two precisely alike, I am urging that you leave off that which is of human origin and simply take the Bible as your sole creed.⁹

Hardeman also pointed out in that famed sermon that one of the leading reasons the challenge of the great infidel Robert Owen of New Lanark, Scotland went unanswered by the "clergy" of America was attributable to the fact that they knew he could effectively say that they themselves did not have faith in the all-sufficiency of the Bible as evidenced by their human creeds. Alexander Campbell accepted the challenge and met Owen in debate in April of 1829. Hardeman aptly observed, "Since that time infidelity has been on the defense and it never has been able to uproot and destroy the word of the Lord."¹⁰

Contemporary Innovation

In the March and April 2000, editions of **The Christian Chronicle**, published by the Oklahoma Christian University, the Community Church received

glowing reviews. Fourteen Community Churches that have developed out of former churches of Christ specifically were mentioned. In these articles Flavil Yeakley, professor in the College of Bible and Religion and director of the Harding Center for Church Growth Studies at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, acknowledged the work of a Baptist preacher and commended the merits of a book he wrote. The book is known to be in use far and wide as a pattern or model for church growth among churches of Christ and former churches of Christ now known as Community Churches. Yeakley wrote:

Then the big one—Rick Warren’s book **The Purpose Driven Church** tells the story of the Saddleback Community Church, Orange County, Calif. Rick is a Baptist, and his church is a Baptist Church, but he wanted to reach out to the unchurched and felt that the name “Baptist” might be a barrier.

This approach is a step in the direction of non-denominational Christianity, and I think that Stone, Campbell and other Restoration Movement pioneers would rejoice to see this development. It is not enough, but it is a step in the right direction.¹¹

The use of this book as a pattern or model in churches of Christ is evidence that the all-sufficiency of the Bible is under attack from within the Lord’s church. Chapter five of **The Purpose Driven Church** is a step by step guide for composing articles of faith. Of course, Warren does not refer to them as articles of faith or a creed but instead as discovering and defining the church’s purpose, thus, “The Purpose Driven Church.” Warren tells how to “lead your church to define its purposes.” Then he discusses “what makes an effective purpose statement,” that is, “it is biblical,” “it is specific,” “it is transferable,” and “it is measurable.” Before concluding the chapter he offers as

an example Saddleback's purpose statement: "To bring people to Jesus and **membership** in his family, develop them to Christlike **maturity**, and equip them for their **ministry** in the church and life **mission** in the world, in order to **magnify** God's name."¹² Creeds like this are always viewed by those who write and follow them as harmless, innocent, and expedient. The greatest danger in devising them is that they diminish respect for the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. The mentality always seems to be "if these terse little slogans promote church growth and encapsulate a sense of mission, then what else may we add to our repertoire to pep things up." The sage advice of Hebrews needs a fresh study, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

Calvinism's Invasion

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Paul did not say the sword of the Spirit is **not** the Word of God. Paul did not say the sword of the Spirit **sometimes** is the Word of God. He said, "The sword of the Spirit which **is** the word of God." The Holy Spirit cannot be separated from His Word. Therefore, anyone claiming a direct operation of the Holy Spirit today necessarily denies Ephesians 6:17. Direct operation of the Holy Spirit today is an erroneous tenet of Calvinism. It seems that once the position of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the human spirit is taken, the power and place of the Word of God loses its luster. Robert R. Taylor, Jr. wrote, "I have had many discussions with Pentecostals. Not that first one thought as much of God's Word as what he thought he had within him—the direct guidance of Deity."¹³ Institutions of higher learning associated with churches of Christ are advancing the direct operation of the Holy

Spirit. A half-page advertisement that has appeared in many editions of **Church & Family** magazine published by Harding University reads:

Do you hear it? **At times it is so strong** that it startles us. At other times it is barely noticeable. Yes, it sometimes comes in the midst of a crisis. But it also might surface during moments of reflective solitude and meditation. It can be unsettling, even disturbing, but to this very day it remains clear, biblical and personal. It is **the call of God. Harding School of Biblical Studies exists** for those who dare to respond in faith to this call of God. **Do you hear Him calling you?** Let Harding School of Biblical Studies help you in fulfilling God's purpose for your life today!¹⁴

Aside from the depressing demotion of hearing a direct call of God to the ministry and then requiring expensive, uninspired instruction in order to “fulfill God’s purpose for your life today,” the School of Biblical Studies needs to go to school itself and learn that the call of God is not a direct one, but the call of God comes through means, specifically, the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). Nothing in the advertisement implies knowledge of this truth.

A debate on the subject of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in addition to the written Word featured the proposition affirmed by Mac Deaver, “The Bible teaches that, in addition to His sanctifying influence through His Word, the Holy Spirit operates directly to sanctify the heart of the faithful Christian.”¹⁵ Jerry Moffitt denied this proposition. Moffitt affirmed and Deaver denied the proposition, “The Bible teaches that, in the process of perfecting a holy character in the Christian, the Holy Spirit always operates indirectly on the heart to sanctify it, and only through the medium of His indwelling, abiding, and active Word.”¹⁶ The only distinction between Deaver’s

affirmation concerning the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and the affirmation of Dr. Glenn V. Tingley of the Christian Missionary Alliance, in his debate with W. Curtis Porter in Birmingham, Alabama, in February of 1947, is that Tingley argued for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion and Deaver argues for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Compare the two propositions:

<u>Deaver</u>	<u>Tingley</u>
The Bible teaches that in addition to His sanctifying influence through His Word, the Holy Spirit operates directly to sanctify the heart of the faithful Christian.	The Scriptures Teach that in the Conversion of Alien Sinners the Holy Spirit Operates Directly upon them as well as Through the Word of Truth or Gospel of Christ. ¹⁷

Not in dispute is that the Holy Spirit operates. The question is “How?” If directly “as well as through” or “in addition to” the Word of God, then the Calvinistic position is taken wherein the Holy Spirit is (at least at times) separated from His sword, His medium. If only through the Word of God, then the text in Ephesians 6:17 (among others) is honored. Whether the alleged operation of the Holy Spirit occurs before or after one becomes a Christian, the unanswered challenge common to both cases is the presentation of the passage which says, “Directly.” Tingley could not produce it in 1947; Deaver did not produce it in 2000.

The Word of God “is able to save your souls,” according to James (Jas. 1:21). And, Peter affirmed that God “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). So, the sword of the Spirit is all-sufficient to accomplish God’s purposes in the conversion and the sanctification of man. Opposition to this truth

carries the logical responsibility to show wherein the Word of God is insufficient to bring about the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of the saints. Job mentioned those who try to challenge God, and said, "If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand" (Job 9:3).

Closing Instructions

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (Deut. 4:2).

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psm. 1:1-2).

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word (Psm. 119:99-101).

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psm. 119:105).

Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way (Psm. 119:128).

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever (Psm. 119:160).

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name (Psm. 138:2).

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good

way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein (Jer. 6:16).

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Isa. 66:1-2).

Endnotes

1 Gleason L. Archer, Jr., **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction** (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1964), p. 87. Archer holds Julius Wellhausen's books published in 1876 and 1878 respectively to be the "most important contributions" to the documentary hypothesis.

2 Adron Doran and J. E. Choate, **The Christian Scholar, A Biography of Hall Laurie Calhoun** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1985), p. 86.

3 J. E. Choate, "How We Lost the College of the Bible," **The Spiritual Sword** 22:4 (July 1991), pp. 26-29.

4 **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary** (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1980), p. 1156.

5 See the article in **The Spiritual Sword** by Gary McDade on "Take Heed unto Doctrine," 31:3 (April 2000), pp. 26-29.

6 **N. B. Hardeman, Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons**, Vol. V (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1943, reprint ed. 1976), p. 135.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

8 **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary**, p. 265.

9 **Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons**, pp. 136-137.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

11 **The Christian Chronicle** 57:3 (March 2000), p. 18.

12 Rick Warren, **The Purpose Driven Church** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 107; also, a statement like this appears in "A Theological and Strategic Statement for a New Church Planting" authored by Gary Ealy and John Mark Hicks, who is professor of Christian Doctrine at

Harding University Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee. Their “Theological and Strategic Statement” was written on October 5, 1997, and contains in addition to the mission statement four initial articles of faith followed by five goals, an organizational structure, theological presuppositions, and ten follow-up articles of faith. (It is eight pages in length). The name of their new church is The Cordova Community Church and will sometimes have appended to that title “a (lowercase ‘a’) church of Christ.” Sadly, four Memphis congregations went in together with The Cordova Community Church on April 2, 2000, for what was billed as a “Day of Praise.” Five other area congregations joined in with them in advertising the event in their bulletins. The joint service was held in the facilities of Harding Academy Junior High and High School located on Cherry Road in Memphis. The Cordova Community Church began meeting in the new facilities of Harding Academy in Cordova on Macon Road. For a more extensive treatment of this movement see: *The Spiritual Sword*, Alan E. Highers, ed., “The Community Church” 32:1 (Oct. 2000) and “The Community Church” by Gary McDade, a tract published by the Getwell Church of Christ.

13 Robert R. Taylor, Jr., “How the Godhead Dwells in Man,” **Ripley Beacon** 26:40 (May 14, 2000), p. 3.

14 Howard W. Norton, ed. **Church & Family** 2:4 (Summer 2000), p. 15.

15 **The Gospel Journal** (March 2000), p. 32.

16 *Ibid.*

17 **Porter-Tingley Debate** (Murfreesboro, TN: George W. DeHoff Publisher, 1947), p. 7. The textual enhancements are not in the original but have been added to highlight specific points of comparison between the two propositions. The capitalization does faithfully reproduce the original.

CHAPTER 29

Why Should I Believe The Bible When There Is So Much Religious Division?

David B. Jones

Commendation

GOD HAS BEEN GRACIOUS enough once again to allow us the privilege and opportunity to participate in the annual **POWER** Lectureship. We are ever grateful for all this great congregation has done over the years for the cause of Christ. Paul once wrote to his beloved brethren in Thessalonica and said:

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing (1 Thess. 1:8).¹

Truly, from this place the Word of the Lord goes forth, and, with the support given to “foreign” missions, the Word goes throughout the entire world.

Her godly elders are to be commended for the straightforward stand they make on the Bible. They are men who are compassionate and convicted. Their efforts will help populate heaven with many more saints. We are also appreciative of B. J. Clarke and his family as they

have labored here now some fifteen years. His influence is spread abroad, and his defense of truth has helped keep our county as strong as possible. He does a fine job directing this lectureship each year. Wayne Jones and his fine family serve the Lord fervently and faithfully as well. This young man is wise beyond his years, and he is a great asset to the work which goes forth from this place. Truly, the church is blessed to have two men who fill the pulpit and teach the truth without fear or favor of any man. And they are blessed to have such an eldership to stand behind, beside, and in front of them as they carry forth the great commission.

The theme for this year's lectureship is timely and timeless. We should always be willing to give solid evidence as to why we believe the Bible to be the Word of God. The church should never shrink from defending the Bible's authenticity and accuracy. She should be even more militant in taking the unsearchable riches of Christ to the world. While we live in the most intelligent age ever known to man in some respects, we also live in one of the most ignorant ages when it comes to Bible knowledge. We have been able to put men on the moon, beam news around the world in a split-second, create cars which are almost houses on wheels, and yet we have multitudes of people who do not even know God exists. And, sadly, many who claim to believe in God could no more tell you what the Bible says about fundamental subjects than the proverbial "cow in the Texas"! Sadder yet is the fact that many who are members of the Lord's church have to hunt to find the books of the Bible, much less know what they teach. So, indeed, this lectureship is needed and should be heeded.

Introduction

Our subject this chapter is to answer the question, "Why should I believe the Bible when there is so much

religious division in the world?” Being able to answer this question means we must understand that someone or something has caused division.

First of all, then, we need to know that the religious division in the world is **not** the result of God or of heaven. We are warned that we have a common enemy whose name is Satan. Peter plainly called him our adversary: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The Devil’s desire is to devour God’s crowning creation—man. He will do that through any one of the three avenues he uses:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

In the Old Testament, we have a picture of how the Devil tried to devour a man named Job. The Bible tells us that, when the angels came before God (Job 1:6), Satan also came with them. God asked Satan where he had been and here was his answer: “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7). Satan was going to and fro seeking whom he may devour. Based on what Peter wrote, he is still seeking to devour God’s creation.

Having laid a foundation from both the Old and New Testaments that Satan desires to devour man, we turn our attention to answering the question, “Why is there so much religious division?” The eternal purpose of God, according to Paul’s writings, was to establish the church of Christ. Paul wrote:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:8-11).

God's plan before the foundation of the world was to establish the church into which He would add the saved: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). This was the "mystery" which God had, and it was revealed to us through the writings of the inspired men.

Peter also wrote of this salvation, showing us that it was revealed in God's own time and in His way:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Peter spoke of the writings of the Old Testament prophets who spoke of the coming of the church, but did not themselves understand all that they wrote, yet wrote what God told them to write. Now, salvation was being preached

by the apostles through the Holy Spirit Who had been sent down to them from heaven. The revelation from God taught of the establishment of the church and God called it His eternal purpose.

Since the church was the eternal purpose of God, and, since Satan desired to devour man and destroy God, logic follows that he would attack the church in every way known to him. We have a glimpse of this when Jesus told His disciples about the building of His church and first mentioned His death on the cross. The Bible records:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matt. 16:13-28).

In this lengthy passage, we are taught many precepts and principles of the coming of the church. Jesus professes the fact that He will build His church on the fact of His Deity (Matt. 16:18). He even prophesies the fact that the gates of hell (literally “hades”) will not stop the establishment of His church. In essence He tells them He will go into the hadean world, but His going will not stop the establishment of His church. He then explains to the apostles that He will give them the keys to the kingdom. Since He uses the church and kingdom interchangeably, this is one argument to show that the church and kingdom are the same. Jesus began then to show them that He was going to be killed. At that point, Peter rebuked his Lord, and Jesus accused him of being a servant for Satan. It is interesting that Christ rebuked him for savoring the things of men. To have tried to stop Jesus from going to the cross would have been trying to stop the plan of God. And if the plan of God could be stopped, then the place of safety and salvation for man would not have been established, and Satan would have had the ultimate victory over God. So even then Satan was trying to devour Peter.

But that would not be the only time Satan would attempt to devour Peter. Later we read regarding Peter:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me (Luke 22:31-34).

Jesus knew how relentless Satan was and how he wanted to destroy Peter. Peter was one of the leaders among the apostles, so he was one the Devil would desire to devour. Later, we will read that Peter did deny the Lord three times despite the fact that the Lord warned him about Satan's attack, and even gave him a second warning.

Mark's account of the denial reads as follows: "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mark 14:30). Later, in this same account, we read of Peter's first denial, and Mark records:

And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew (Mark 14:67-68).

Notice that, the **first** time that Peter denied the Lord, the cock crowed once. This was a second warning to Peter, but he proceeded anyway to deny the Lord three times.

What does all this mean relative to our question? This means that the Devil attacked God's creation—man. He assaulted the Christ (Matt. 4:1-11). The Tempter tried Peter, and he tried to stop the establishment of the church. Now, he makes war with the church in his various ways. One of those ways is through confusion, causing religious division. When people are confused about matters, they

tend to shy away from them and create their own ways. The Proverbs writer said, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Man’s ways are **not** God’s ways unless they are based on God’s ways. Heaven revealed:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:8-11).

In fact, the Bible teaches that God is not the author of confusion: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33).

So, if God is not the author of confusion, and there is confusion in the religious world, then who is responsible? Since we have laid the foundation, we can safely say that the Devil is the author of the confusion in the religious world. So just why is there division in the religious world? There are several reasons we can see that cause religious confusion, and they all are a result of the Devil’s seeking whom he may devour.

Ignorance Is A Reason For Religious Confusion

God created man in His own image and after His own likeness:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion

over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Man was created with the ability to think and reason. Isaiah said to the Jews of his day, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). **If** man could not reason, then why did the prophet of God call them to reason with God? Reasoning then calls for the ability to have a mind and a brain capable of intelligence. Jesus once asked His enemies, "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard" (Matt. 21:28). Jesus called upon His enemies to think and to reason regarding a certain situation.

So, if it is possible to reason and think, then it is possible to consume and compile information in a logical arrangement. If that is true, then it would also be possible not to consume and compile information. And, according to the Proverbs writer, it is possible for a man to create his own information and arrange it in his way, which may not be God's ways (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8-11). Therefore, ignorance could cause a man to create his own religious system. Man's created system would not be authorized by God. In fact, Jesus said this would be revealed at the judgment:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy

name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

Jesus indicated that, on Judgment Day, some would plead their cases, professing works which were not authorized by God. Therefore, these would be works done in ignorance of what God approves.

It is interesting that, in the Scriptures, this idea of ignorance is cited time after time by inspiration. The subjects under consideration are subjects which today still cause religious division. When one searches the New Testament, he finds subjects such as spiritual gifts, the Second Coming of Christ, the power of God unto salvation, the plan of God justifying men in one body, etc.

The first instance we notice is when Paul penned the letter to the Romans. Paul wrote to the Romans and wanted them to understand that, even in a culture which prided itself in men's oratory skills, the power of God unto salvation was the Gospel:

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:13-17).

In the first text we will explore, Paul is writing to the church at Rome. He commenced this epistle by saying in verse one that he was an apostle and separated unto the Gospel. This means he was commissioned by His Lord to

preach the Gospel to the entire world (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). He points out also that this Lord is the very Son of God (Rom. 1:4). His mission as an apostle is to teach obedience to the faith (Rom. 1:5).

Then, he makes the epistle very personal by commending them for their faith which is spoken of throughout all the world (Rom. 1:7-8). The aged apostle next expresses his desire to come to them to impart their needed spiritual gifts so they would be strengthened and further established (Rom. 1:11-12).

This is the context in which he writes the passage we noted earlier. He wants them to be learned and not ignorant of the fact that he felt a debt to preach the Gospel to all men because it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is God's power unto salvation. Paul was **not** interested in making a name for himself or drawing attention to the speaker. He had also pointed out to the Corinthians this same principle:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

In the Corinthian culture, men drew attention to their oratory skills. Paul warned the church in Corinth that he was not seeking personal glory, but he only wanted their faith to stand in the power of God, which was the preaching of the Gospel to save their souls. Paul had obvious ability to preach, but he also knew that his responsibility as an apostle of Jesus Christ was to glorify

God and not himself. Paul wanted the church in Rome to know that God had revealed His plan for our salvation through **and only through** the Gospel! The inspired penman also revealed that God's righteousness was revealed through His Gospel and that the just (before God) was the one who lived by faith. The precepts which allowed them to be just were delivered only through the Gospel!

Many would pervert the Gospel today, just as they did in Paul's day. Do we remember what Paul said to the churches in Galatia?

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:6-10).

The Judaizers were going about trying to bind certain requirements on the Gentiles and to relax and add others for the Jews. Paul stood amazed that the Galatians had been deceived and were being devoured by these false teachers. These false teachers had taught things which were destructive to the souls of the church. Although it takes almost an act of Congress in some places for brethren to understand that the church still has false teachers today, we still face this problem.

We have brethren who would open the doors of the church of Christ and extend the right hand of fellowship to the denominational world. Paul spoke of the hands of fellowship when he wrote to the Galatians:

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision (Gal. 2:9).

But this fellowship was extended by the church in Jerusalem to brethren who were teaching the truth to the Gentiles! We do not have the authority of heaven to extend fellowship to the denominational world because heaven does **not** extend such fellowship!! John wrote, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). We have fellowship with heaven and each other **if** we walk in the light. Walking in the light is synonymous with obeying the Word of God: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psm. 119:105). The Word of God must be obeyed if one is to have heaven’s fellowship.

The Bible reveals that Jesus built His church: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). He did not promise to build many churches or even two! He promised to build **His** church—singular! And this He did. He paid the price which was His blood: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Since He paid the price with **His** blood, no man has the right to build, or rather try to build, another. At the time of this writing, the body of so-called “Pope John Paul II” lies in state in Rome. Millions will file by to have a view of his now-dead body. Television coverage is extensive, showing many aspects of the Catholic church as they prepare for his funeral. However, the Bible nowhere authorizes the

Catholic church to exist. The irony of it all is that, from this apostate group, the denominational world had its origin, dating back to 1517 and Martin Luther's open criticism of its activities. From that began the Reformation Movement and the subsequent, ever-developing, erroneous world of denominations.

The saddest part is that many in the Lord's church would have us welcome them into the church—**just as they are!** Certainly, we would welcome them to become members of the church—but only when they obey the Gospel which Paul preached and wanted to preach to the church in Rome! The Lord's church is called His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Paul stated emphatically that there was **one** body (Eph. 4:4). If the church is the body and there is **one** body—then there can be **only one** church! The Lord's church began in A.D. 33 (Acts 2), and there is **no** other church or body authorized! However, we are still plagued with this perversion today!

We are today plagued with brethren preaching a perverted Gospel in other areas. Some teach that the kingdom will one day be established on earth. We call this doctrine Premillennialism. This is error and nothing but error! The Lord established His kingdom on earth, and those who are members of His kingdom have been translated there upon their obedience:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).

When John wrote the Revelation, he was in the kingdom:

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9).

John was their brother in the kingdom in A.D. 96. If he was in the kingdom then, the kingdom had to have been established! The Bible reveals in many, many ways that the kingdom is already established. The reader is invited to study the following verses and see this simple truth explicitly (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Acts 2). Jesus said that some of the Jews listening to Him would be alive when the kingdom came with power. The apostles were told to return to Jerusalem after the ascension of Christ and tarry there till they were endowed with power from on high. In Acts 1:8, the apostles were told that the power would come when the Holy Spirit came. In Acts 2, we see that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. That means the kingdom came on that day and, since it was established on that day, it will **not** be established at some future day!

Other perversions could be listed, but these substantiate the fact that Paul's plea to Rome for them not to be ignorant of the fact that God's power to save resides in the Gospel is still a plea which is valid for the church today!

Second, we notice a case where Paul pointed to ignorance:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:25-26).

Paul was reminding the Gentiles that the plan of God eternally involved all men being made one in Christ in one body. He did not want the Romans, particularly those of Gentile background, to be ignorant and without understanding regarding the plan of God. Being made one

body involved both Jew and Gentile. The Jews had thought that, since God chose them as instruments through whom Christ was to come, and through whom the Old Law was given, they were the only chosen ones of God. They deemed the Gentiles unworthy of salvation; thus, God had to send a vision to Peter (Acts 10) to send him to the household of Cornelius. Peter went and the household of Cornelius was baptized (Acts 10:48).

Paul spoke of this mystery when he wrote to the Ephesians:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power (Eph. 3:2-7).

The mystery which was revealed by God was that all men would be made one in Christ. There would only be one body of saved people, and anyone who wanted to be saved had to be in this body. Paul also wrote to the Ephesians and said, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Paul wanted them to understand that anyone who would be saved in the last days would be saved in the same body and by the same plan.

How sad it is today to see so many trying to be saved in various ways and by various plans! We all have family who seek to please God, but they do it by the wrong authority. Paul even wrote to the Romans about this very fact:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:1-4).

The peerless apostle wanted the Jews to be saved, but he also knew they had pride, and their pride stood in their way of obeying the Gospel which would save them. He understood their zeal, but zeal without knowledge is not enough. We must have zeal, but that zeal must be based in authority—and the proper authority!

These same subjects which Paul was concerned about then are subjects which still serve as problems for the church today. We have brethren today—big-named and not big-named—who still do not understand the mystery which God revealed in the New Testament. They try and open the doors of the church to those who are outside the church, hoping to attract and draw larger crowds. We have a congregation close to us here in Desoto County which boasts and brags about being the biggest church in Mississippi. They have opened the doors to just about any and every one who remotely confesses that Jesus is the Christ and that He was resurrected the third day. They have used false teachers in the past to make a name for themselves. Today, they try and cover this up, but it is a matter of public record.

The Lord's church is singular and exclusive. It has been since its establishment, and it will be till the Lord returns in the clouds to take His family home to His Father. Jesus said Himself: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"

(Matt. 16:18). Jesus did **not** promise to build more than one church—but He promised to build His church! We have brethren who have become willingly ignorant of this fact. The saddest fact is that now one, if not two, generations have been reared who believe this error. When we reach out to those around us, we find many who say those of us who try to seek the old paths are too judgmental and too narrow-minded. We are often accused of being unloving because we say some people are lost. However, the Lord Himself spoke on various occasions about people being lost (Matt. 7:13-14; Matt. 7:21-23; Matt. 23). Our critics say that He could, since He was the Lord. However, He has left us His will (Heb. 1:1-3), and so, when we speak what He said, we are speaking for Him!! We need more members who are **not** afraid of the people but who speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

We have compassion for those who are lost and who have been fed the lies of Satan, but we have more conviction for heaven and what we have been charged to preach (2 Tim. 4:1-5)! We need to be a people who are about teaching the truth and not being afraid of what someone might think of us or say about us!

Third, we notice what Paul wrote to the Corinthians and how he warned them about the attacks of Satan: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1). Paul writes this verse in the midst of a three-chapter context. Beginning in 1 Corinthians 8, Paul deals with the subject of eating meats offered to idols. This was a common problem for Corinth. This is a problem with which we are not familiar, but we also learn some important Bible principles to use as we work with each other. Paul began this section by writing, “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge.

Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (1 Cor. 8:1). The church in Corinth had been given a good share of spiritual gifts (knowledge). Paul warns them that, even though they have an abundance of spiritual gifts, the problem of eating meats offered to idols is a real problem. The Corinthians would have been exposed to the situation of either being served meat at the home of heathen friends or else this meat might be for sale in the shambles, or daily markets. Barnes writes concerning this subject:

In this chapter another subject is discussed, which had been proposed by the congregation at Corinth for the decision of the apostle. “Whether it was right for Christians to partake of the meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols?” On this question there would be doubtless a difference of opinion among the Corinthian Christians. When those sacrifices were made to pagan gods, a part of the animal was given to the priest that officiated, a part was consumed on the altar, and a part (probably the principal part) was the property of him who offered it. This part was either eaten by him at home, as food which had been in some sense consecrated or blessed by having been offered to an idol; or it was partaken of at a feast in honor of the idol; or it was in some instances exposed for sale in the market in the same way as other meat. Whether, therefore, it would be right to partake of that food, either when invited to the house of a pagan friend, or when it was exposed for sale in the market, was a question which could not but present itself to a conscientious Christian. The objection to partaking of it would be, that to partake of it either in the temples or at the feasts of their pagan neighbors, would be to lend their countenance to idolatry.²

As Barnes points out, the brethren in Corinth would face this situation in their daily lives. It was not a sin to buy the meat in the markets or to eat it at the table of someone who might be hosting a dinner. However, there

might have been some weaker brethren who had a conscience problem with the eating of this meat in any way. Paul argues that the strong ought not to force their opinions and cause a weaker person to stumble. Paul writes:

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend (1 Cor. 8:7-13).

They were no more commended by God because they ate or did not eat the meat, but, if the strong ones with knowledge forced their way on the weaker, then the ones with knowledge sinned before God, casting a stumbling block before the weak.

Paul went into 1 Corinthians 9 and said that he daily buffeted his body, bringing it into subjection. He did so because he did not want to be puffed up in his knowledge and become arrogant and thus sin.

He began 1 Corinthians 10 by reminding them that there were some Jews who had sinned because they had been lifted up with pride. Moreover, some of their forefathers had partaken of idolatrous services and sinned in doing so. They were drawn into this trap through the

subtlety of the Devil. Paul warned the Corinthians so they would not do the same thing. While it was not a sin to eat this meat at the home of someone who hosted them, nor was it a sin to buy it in the markets, it would have been wrong to go to the idols' temples and eat there. Paul knew there would be the temptation for the Corinthians to go and be like the people of the world. He told them that their fathers had been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea. That is, they had been separated from the Egyptians by the Red Sea. Because they had been delivered by God and separated unto God through the leadership of Moses, they should have been separate and should not have been partaking with the idolaters in their temples. Paul did not want them to be ignorant about the deceitfulness and destructive nature of the Devil. Satan would have sought to blind their hearts and dull their thinking to the point they would partake of the idolatrous worship. Paul also knew they had some knowledge, and, because of this knowledge, they might be puffed up and vain in their imaginations.

Today, we face the same problems. We still face the same foe, and he continues to tempt us with the same three avenues:

Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

There are many things associated with this life which may not be wrong within themselves, but we must be careful about the two main problems. First, we could cause a weaker brother to stumble if his faith has not developed

as strong as ours. He might wound or sin against his conscience, and thus we would be casting a stumblingblock into his path. Also, the thing which we do might lead us in the direction of the world, and, if we are not careful, the Devil could lure us into his kingdom. Paul warned his brethren in Corinth that they needed to be careful and not think they were above falling. Unless their dependence was on God, they were ready to fall at that point.

We must remember first that we have been bought with a price:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Lord paid the price for us at the cross. This knowledge ought to help us as we are tempted by the Devil. Jesus said of Himself, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). As we are approached by the Devil, we ought to be reminded that there was One Who was willing to take our place that we through Him might live!

Second, we need to remember that we are tempted by the Devil and **not** by God. James writes:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

The Devil is only able to tempt us through the lusts of our own minds. He cannot overpower us or make us do

anything against our will. He will, however, use everything he can find to deceive us and trick us. He is crafty, cunning, and clever. He desires that all men be damned, and God desires all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). The choice is clearly ours.

Third, we have armor, which helps us fight off the darts of the Wicked One. Paul wrote about the armor when he penned the letter to the Ephesians:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

We have protection, but we must make sure we stay within the confines of that armor. We need to read, study, and make application of the Word of God so we can thwart the fiery darts of the Wicked One.

We also need to remember we are children of light and not of the night. Paul wrote:

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are

drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:4-8).

Since we are to be of the light, we ought to walk in the light (1 John 1:7) and not to walk according to the course of this world (Eph. 4:1-3).

If we remember these four principles, we will be able to walk in the steps of Christ and not fall victim to the Devil. We need to be careful not to get too close to the world, lest we fall after the example of the Jews of old time. We should not be ignorant of these facts, but, rather, have our senses exercised by the Word of God so we can walk pleasing to God.

Paul did not want those brethren in Rome nor us to be ignorant of the fact that God's eternal plan included all men being made one in one body. He went on to tell them how to be added to that one body. We read:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5).

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and said, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1). The church in Corinth had so many problems which were addressed by heaven through the pen of Paul, and we would do well to read and study these problems in the church today.

It is a truly a sad situation when one examines and investigates the religious community. There are various so-called "churches" which wear various and sundry names.

Various plans of salvation exist in the denominational minds—based on what they have been taught and handed down over the generations. Worship services vary with the particular religious group—no two being the same. While all these differences exist—they **all** claim to follow the **same** God and the **same** Bible! With just a quick examination of the Scriptures, one can see that this is impossible:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17:20-22).

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:17).

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37).

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

We can see from a reading of these verses that unity is what is decreed and demanded by God. While we are told by the religious world, and the skeptic, that understanding the Bible alike is impossible, the God of heaven said that such was not only possible, but commanded.

There is a prominent denomination which teaches that one must be able to speak in tongues miraculously before that individual is saved by heaven. The following is a quote from its official web site:

We believe...the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Special Experience Following Salvation that empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times. [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the A/G]... **We believe...**The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is Speaking in Tongues, as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.

The Salvation of Man—Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit. The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness.³

This teaching gives even some in the Lord's church problems today. Especially for those who have slacked away from a diligent study of the Bible do the doubts and debates come.

We will examine and expose this erroneous teaching in this lesson and also show exactly what the Bible says relative to salvation. From the official web site once again we quote relative to their origin:

Our History—The Assemblies of God has its roots in a religious revival that began in the late 1800s. In 1914 both preachers and laymen gathered from 20 states and several foreign countries for a "general council" in Hot Springs, Arkansas.⁴

The Bible says the church was to begin in Jerusalem (Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 2:2-3). The church was to begin in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44-45). The church did begin on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33 (Acts 2). Since the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) began in A.D. 33, and the Assembly of God denomination began in 1914—we can

safely conclude that the A of G began 1881 years too late! As we begin to examine the doctrine which they teach that says one must be able to speak in tongues as a proof of salvation in the church, we look at the church in Corinth.

Situation In Corinth

The first-century church needed miraculous spiritual gifts to enable them to carry out the great commission until God had revealed His will to man. This is that to which Peter referred when he said: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). The “gift of the Holy Spirit” was the miraculous manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. When Cornelius and his household had assembled to hear what Peter said, the Bible records:

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. (Acts 10:45-46).

Cornelius and his household had been given the miraculous ability to speak in languages which could be understood—languages they had not previously studied. This was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

Both Jew (Acts 2) and Gentile (Acts 10) had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring on the household of Cornelius was **not** for salvation because they

are told afterwards to be baptized. In fact, they are commanded to do so:

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days (Acts 10:47-48).

The outpouring was a sign to the prejudiced Jews that the Gentiles were also worthy of God's mercy and grace extended to all men through Christ.

There was the need for men to be given the various gifts of the Spirit to edify the body of Christ till all of revelation had been given. These temporary gifts were to last only till the unity had been achieved. Paul so affirmed in the letter to the Ephesians:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:8-13).

Once the Word had been revealed **and** confirmed, there would be no need for the miraculous. Mark recorded that the Lord confirmed His word with miracles: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:20).

The situation in Corinth dictated that the miraculous gifts were necessary for the church there to function as the body of Christ in the first century. Paul had established the congregation on his second missionary journey (Acts 18), working with them eighteen months. After he departed, he learned that there were many divisions in the church, and so the Holy Spirit inspired and instructed Paul to write the first letter to the Corinthians. In that epistle Paul addressed many problems—the main one being division: a) Carnality (1 Cor. 3); b) Immorality (1 Cor. 5); c) Going to law before the unbelievers (1 Cor. 6); d) Marriage (1 Cor. 7); e) Eating meats offered to idols (1 Cor. 8-10); f) Spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14); 6) Resurrection—actually false teachers (1 Cor. 15). Our study for this lesson centers on the misuse and abuse of the spiritual gifts as Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Spiritual Gifts In Corinth

The unity which the Corinthians lacked was shown to them as Paul wrote concerning spiritual gifts. Paul did not want his brethren there to be ignorant regarding God's plan and pattern which He had designed and decreed. The Corinthians had exalted one above another because of the gifts each possessed. Those who could speak in tongues were exalted above the rest, and division was the consequence. First, Paul explicitly tells them of the unity: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit...But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:11). Second, Paul uses a human illustration—the human body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Third, Paul makes his application by chiding them for exalting one above another because of the possession of the various gifts (1 Cor. 12:28-31).

Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 13 that charity—*agape* love—was the most important "gift" each one should have

possessed. In fact, without such, nothing each one did would profit anything. Paul pointed out, first, the consequences without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3); second, the characteristics of love (1 Cor. 13:4-7); and, third, the culmination of these temporary gifts (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul returns to his discourse on temporary gifts—understanding that they should have had love for one another, and then the exaltation which they had done would not have taken place. It is in this context that he writes these words:

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe (1 Cor. 14:20-22).

Paul wants them to understand that they needed to be grown up (mature) in their dealings with one another. He quoted to them from Isaiah 28:11 and chided them for turning the blessing of God into a curse. He reminded them that their forefathers had refused to hear God's instructions through the prophets so God allowed them to be overtaken by a wicked and cruel nation that spoke in languages they did not understand. Bob Winton has some timely comments about these verses:

The quotation is from Isa. 28:11f (cf. Deut. 28:46-49). Isaiah was telling the drunken priests who mocked him that God would speak to them in a very different way: by the Assyrians, who spoke a language the Jews did not understand. Since the Jews refused to heed what the prophets spoke to them of God's will, God said punishment would be brought

on them by those who spoke a tongue they did not know (strange tongues, lips of strangers). Being spoken to by this strange tongue was a mark of God's displeasure and punishment. From this quotation Paul was seeking to show them that it was not a mark of divine favor for them to have masters (or teachers) whose language they could not understand. They were turning a blessing (the gift of tongues which was intended to edify them) into a curse. By misusing the gift they were not inviting God's favor or accruing any profit to themselves. When properly used, the gift of tongues was a blessing: it could teach, bring about a better understanding of God's will, and thus edify them. But to use it as a mere display was to misuse the gift and to invite God's displeasure. The use of the gift of tongues (cf. Acts 2:1ff) was a sign to the unbeliever that the speaker spoke by the power of God. While the use of tongues could instruct the believer, it showed the unbeliever that God was with the one exercising this gift. This was the only conclusion the unbeliever could reach, since it is thus implied that he knew that the speaker had not learned the tongue through any natural means.⁵

The Corinthians were misusing the gift of God, and, instead of edifying one another, they were battling one another and had not come to understand the true nature of the gifts and why God had given them.

Salvation In Corinth

The ability to speak in tongues in Corinth was not designed to prove their salvation—but was rather for the purpose of prophesying and preaching the Gospel to the lost. Paul explained that tongues were a sign to the **unbeliever** in the power of God and not to the believer! The Corinthians should have used the gift to further the cause of Christ and not to further their personal status.

The salvation which was offered by Christ was realized when one was baptized into the body:

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

This salvation was offered to both Jew and Gentile. This salvation was proclaimed and preached with the aid of spiritual gifts because the Word of God had not been revealed totally at this time.

Speaking in tongues was **not** a sign or proof of salvation—but rather the means which God used to make known His salvation which was available in Christ.

Paul wanted his brethren to have knowledge of the design of the spiritual gifts they had in Corinth (and everywhere else in the brotherhood), the directions of how to use these gifts, and the duration of these gifts. We still have brethren today who are ignorant of all of these things mentioned. This problem plagues the church continually. More and more brethren are going after other “lovers” when it comes to miracles and the use of them by God when the church was an infant. A careful—yea, even casual—study of the Scriptures will defeat this error.

Inherited Family Traditions

Ignorance is not the only source of religious division in the religious community. Inherited family traditions also cause division among those who profess a belief in Christ. Often, family members have no true Bible knowledge, but will insist on following the traditions of their fathers, mothers, grandfathers, and grandmothers. “If it was good enough for..., then it is good enough for me” is the often heard cry of these type of people. Jesus addressed this issue while on earth on several occasions. One such occasion is recorded in the book of Matthew:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am

come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:34-38).

Jesus told His disciples on this occasion that He did not come to bring peace, yet Isaiah called Him the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7). Paul even wrote that Jesus came to make peace (Eph. 2:13-16). In Matthew's account, Jesus is preparing His disciples for what they will face when they go and teach the house of Israel (Jews). He did not come to bring peace built upon the terms of the Jews. His peace is true and lasting peace and is built and based on Him and His Word:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Col. 3:15).

Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all (2 Thess. 3:16).

The peace of God comes when we allow His Word to fill our hearts and we are at peace with Him and ourselves.

However, many are bent on following their family traditions instead of the Word of God when it comes to religious matters. These feel as though "one church is as good as another," and they say, "that is just your interpretation." They do what they want, and they do it the way they want to do it. They "inherit" these, in that they would rather please Mom and Dad rather than God. Jesus said that, if anyone loves father or mother more than Him, then that one is not worthy to follow Him. We

must be willing to follow the Bible and the Bible only. If our families differ from the Bible, we had better love Jesus more than them when it comes to religion. He is the One Who died for us.

Idolatry

Ignorance and inherited family traditions can cause divisions, but idolatry can also cause division. Idolatry is the worship of anything or anyone other than God. The Jews were warned by God about the worship of idols when they came from Egypt. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments forbade it: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod. 20:4). However, they did not heed the warnings of God and served other gods when they came into the land. They even built a golden calf **before** they left Mount Sinai (Exod. 32). Solomon was one of the worst about idolatry:

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods (1 Kings 11:4-8).

God was displeased because of his and the Jews’ idolatry to the point they were taken into captivity—the ten northern tribes in 721 B.C. and Judah beginning in 606 B.C.

Today we can allow the god of money to cause us religious division. We can desire to go to places where there are more lavish facilities—no matter what the doctrine. We can allow the god of pleasure to divide us. Our desire can be to do things which are not pleasing to God, so we find a place which allows such activities. We can allow the god of convenience to cause us to divide. People leave and go to other places or start their own “churches” to do things which are convenient to them.

But perhaps the greatest threat to division from idolatry is the pride of humans themselves. Satan’s main stumbling block came through pride. When Paul listed the qualifications of an elder he wrote, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). The Devil’s condemnation was pride. Pride is one of the avenues he uses to tempt man today. Satan will exploit anyone’s weakness and use it against him (Jas. 1:13-15). If being submissive to authority is a problem for someone, Satan will use that. Rebellion and pride cause many divisions in religion. Some say, “No one here will tell me what to do!” Some say, “I will do what I want the way I want to!” James exhorted us:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (Jas. 4:7-10).

The humbling of one’s self means that person recognizes a higher Being. In the case of Christianity, one must recognize the majesty of Almighty God. Pride stands in the way of that sometimes with people. The Devil uses

that against any person who will allow him to do so. Pride can truly cause religious division.

Conclusion

Unity in religion was the ultimate eternal purpose of God. Jesus prayed for that unity:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

God sent His Son to die for that unity. Jesus paid the price of reconciling all men in one body (Eph. 2:13-16). Jesus taught the Jews of His day that He and His Father were one: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). This is the unity for which He prayed and died.

Division is a result of the work of the Devil. He desires that men be divided and devoured. Paul chided the Corinthians for their disunity:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you (1 Cor. 1:10-11).

We should not be deceived by the Wicked One, but we must remain faithful and true to the Lord Who loved us and died for us.

The original question we had was, "Why should I believe the Bible when there is so much religious division?" The reason I should believe the Bible is because God gives us free moral agency, and the Devil is allowed to deceive

those who fall victim to him. We should believe the Bible because God sent His Son to die for the church, and there is unity in following the Divine pattern sent down to us from heaven.

Endnotes

1 All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

2 <http://www.e-sword.net/>.

3 <http://www.ag.org/top/>.

4 <http://ag.org/top/about/index.cfm>.

5 Bob Winton, **Commentary On First Corinthians**.

CHAPTER 30

Why Do Some Refuse To Believe The Bible?

Tom Wacaster

Introduction¹

No man ever spake with such power, so clearly and convincingly, every word supported by a flawless character, yearning only that men should come out of darkness into light and out of bondage into liberty, as the Lord Jesus Christ, during His three years on earth. Strange that He who was the truth was rejected, that against the light which shone through Him, men turned their backs, that the gift of eternal life which He gave, some spurned, and that the truths which He set forth many refused to believe.²

YOU AND I MAY find it difficult to understand the heart of a man who refuses to believe, in spite of the abundant evidence and the wonderful blessings promised to those who are willing to believe and obey. But experience teaches us that our preaching is not always readily received. In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-9; Luke 8:4-8; Luke 8:11-15), our Lord noted four types of “soil” where the seed fell: (1) the way side, (2) on the rock, (3) amidst the thorns, and (4) into the good ground. Relative to our study at this hour, we are particularly interested in the first of these four “soils.” In His interpretation of the parable, our Lord said that the seed that fell by “the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and

taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12).

On another occasion, our Lord asked His accusers, “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” (John 8:46). The argument He makes is simple, yet profound. The absence of sin includes necessarily the absence of falsehood; since no blame could be passed upon our Lord, the conclusion is that the words He spoke were, indeed, Truth. Ample evidence has been provided to prove the authenticity and reliability of that Word. Why is it the case, then, that men refuse to believe Him? Or, on a wider scale, why do men not believe the Bible, seeing the Bible as the Word of God?

There are some preliminaries we want to get out of the way before actually addressing the subject at hand. First, it is not within the scope of this lecture to discuss why men reject certain truths while accepting others. Why, for example, do some men accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God while rejecting the importance of baptism? There is a difference, as Wilbur Smith points out, “between not believing a certain truth, and fighting against that truth, or the body of doctrines of which it is a part.”³

Second, we must keep in mind that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the **causes** for unbelief, the **manifestations** of that unbelief, and the **results** proceeding from that unbelief. Take as an example the present state of unbelief in our Western world. Humanism has captivated the minds of men, and there appears to be an almost antireligious sentiment that permeates our present society. It is difficult to determine whether the rejection of truth has produced this age of skepticism, or that this age of skepticism has produced an atmosphere of unbelief.

Third, it is difficult to separate unbelief in the Bible from unbelief in God. The two go hand in hand. Men cannot

reject the Bible without rejecting God, and they cannot reject God without rejecting the Bible.

Fourth, the reasons we shall set forth as an answer to the question “Why do some refuse to believe the Bible?” could as easily be the causes for why men do not believe in God. The one determines the other, and the latter is preceded by the former.

Finally, one’s belief system has a direct bearing upon his behavior. Martin Gardner comments on this very point:

Our whole lives are inevitably affected by the real world around us, so what we believe about it is of the utmost importance. What we believe about reality does not change the truth, nor its effect upon us. Correct belief, however, enables us to know the truth as it is, and then to take appropriate action, so that it will have the best possible effect upon our lives. Having correct beliefs is also necessary because of the large amount and variety of incorrect beliefs which are about.⁴

With this in mind, we shall set forth some of the causes as to why at least some refuse to believe the Bible as the all-sufficient, inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God.

Bias Against God

The Bible clearly teaches that man has a long history of rebelling against God. Both the Word of God and the history of man testify to the astonishing truth that man has developed a strange antagonism against God. There can be no question that at least some people find belief in the Bible difficult for no other reason than the fact that their mind has a bias which predisposes them against it. This bias is what one author called “the prejudice of unbelief.” In his book, **Optimism In An Age of Peril**, Stanley Sayers concluded:

One of the significant and obvious reasons the unbeliever remains an unbeliever is that **he likes it that way**. In fact, any evidence of any source or to any degree fails to move him from his position if his heart is strongly bent **against** evidence and **toward** unbelief.⁵

Take as an example of such bias the case of Charles Darwin. Although Darwin admitted on a number of occasions that it was reasonable to believe in God, and unreasonable to reject God, “yet so determined was he not to believe that he slew reason when reason led him to God.”⁶

While Darwin’s bias caused him to reject the very existence of God, it is precisely the same kind of bias that often leads a man to reject the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Consider a couple of passages that support this conclusion. In Romans 1:20-32, Paul traces the plunge into depravity which follows the rejection of God. What is particularly interesting in this passage is man’s willful rejection of God, a rejection, we might add, that resulted from a predisposition of hatred toward God. In Romans 1:21, Paul acknowledged that they “knew” God, but “glorified him not as God.” As one author put it:

The problem about which the apostle wrote was not a failure to accept what was **unknowable** (the text in Romans clearly indicates that these were people who could, and did, know of the existence of God). Rather, it was a problem of refusing to accept what was **knowable**.⁷

The Psalmist also wrote of man’s bias toward and rebellion against God:

Why do the nations rage, And the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds

asunder, And cast away their cords from us (Psm. 2:1-3).

The Psalmist is describing a willful rejection of God. Wilbur Smith provided this interesting quote from Julius Muller:

There is no contradiction in maintaining that an awe of God may linger in the soul, in connection with aversion against God and everything Godlike. It is founded in the very exalted nature of man created as in the likeness of God, that when he has once estranged himself from God, especially if at some earlier period he has expressed something of living fellowship with God, that he more easily lapses into a concealed hatred against God, then into dead indifference. He cannot easily, wholly withdraw himself from the silent, knowing consciousness of his essential obligation to God, although he incessantly strives to do so, and feels himself driven to react against the same.⁸

Our modern age seems to have reached the point in social development and technological advancements that we seem to think that we no longer need God. Consequently the very foundation upon which the values of this nation were established is being cast off, and, in many cases, it is for no other reason than the fact that men no longer love God. Yea, rather, they have reached the point where they hate God and are determined no longer to hear what He has to say regarding moral and religious behavior.

But why such bias? Why such rebellion? Perhaps the following quote will give us some insight:

[Rebellious men] have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a sort of being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God, yet from what they hear of Him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature of God, they do not like Him. By His being endowed with such attributes as He is, they have an aversion to Him. They hear God is an

infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like Him upon this account; they have no relish of such kind of qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate these attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness nor taste any sweetness in them. And upon the account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all the other of His attributes. They have a greater aversion to Him because He is omniscient and knows all things; because His omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that He is omnipotent, and can do whatever He pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to His mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like His immutability, because by this He never will be otherwise than He is, an infinitely holy God.⁹

In the final analysis, rebellious men have a bias toward God because He represents a threat to man's own desires and ambitions. Some men would rather die in their sin than live forever in obedience to their Creator.

The Darkness Of The Mind Of Man

This particular cause of unbelief in God and rejection of His Word is closely akin to our first point. This cause of unbelief focuses on man's ignorance as an outgrowth of such bias spoken of above. Burton Coffman touches on this relationship of man's willful rebellion and the darkened mind:

The soul which turns away from the knowledge of God is active in the turning away, but passive in the resultant descent into vanity and darkness, such a defector from the light becoming, in time, sub-human; because that part of his brain with which he should honor and glorify God becomes atrophied, hardened, insensible. This accounts for the otherwise incredible blindness which is the chief

characteristic of many so-called intellectuals who have turned away from faith in Christ. Having closed the eyes of their minds with which they might have seen the invisible things of God, such persons eventually find themselves in a state of total disability in the perception of spiritual realities. How profoundly sad is the state of persons like that, with the highest academic degrees, perhaps, and occupying positions of trust and honor, it may be, and possibly considered by their contemporaries as the wisest and ablest of people, but from whose minds the light has gone out, and the knowledge of God has faded. Those, despite their worldly excellence, are the living dead!¹⁰

Whatever intellectual knowledge these people may have had became lost. They became “vain in their reasoning and their senseless heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). The Truth gradually faded from them until they reached the state of debauchery described in Romans 1.

Some men will never believe the Bible for no other reason than the fact that their continual rebellion has led to a state of spiritual darkness and blindness from which it is impossible to recover. Such men

walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart (Eph. 4:17-18).

Perhaps you have asked the following questions. Why are so many intellectual leaders of our day and age enemies of Christianity? Why are the things concerning Christianity not immediately accepted as true by the great mass of humanity? Why do otherwise intelligent men reject the Bible and refuse to heed its message? The answer lies in their darkness of mind and hardened hearts brought about by their rebellion against God. Their hearts are closed; their minds are made up. Any attempt to bring

such individuals to a knowledge and understanding of God's Word is an exercise in futility.

The Pride Of Man

When our Lord said, "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44), He gave one of the major reasons why men have been unwilling to receive the Word of God. Rather than seek the glory of the Father, they sought the glory of one another. Their pride and arrogance blocked their belief. We like Wilbur Smith's comments on this cause of unbelief:

When man says he believes in a Supreme Being, and especially in Jesus Christ His Son, he at the same time, if he is honest, confesses that God is holy, and he, himself, unholy, that God is independent and can do according to His own will, while man is dependent. All this is humiliating; it takes away any cause for pride, for if there is one thing that man has always liked to feel it is that he is sufficient for all things, that he is going to bring about a better world by his own ingenuity, that he is the greatest and highest and most important phenomenon in the world, and that beyond him there is nothing worth considering.¹¹

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche expressed great pride when he asked a friend, "If there were gods, how could I endure it to be no god?" In his famous composition **Invictus**, William Ernest Henley wrote, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." Famed Harvard evolutionist George Gaylord Simpson ended one of his books with the words "Man is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny."¹²

Our Western world has achieved more in the last century than in all previous centuries combined.

Scientifically speaking, we have made great strides. Science has opened up doors that, years ago, we did not even know existed. As Wayne Jackson has noted:

Human knowledge, according to some claims, has increased more in the past fifty years than in all preceding centuries combined! Scientific achievement has gone beyond our forefathers' wildest dreams. And who knows what the future will hold? Whatever comes, there are growing indications that much of it may not be for good, for the ironical thing is, the more scientific knowledge has increased, the more smug man has become. In his egotistical pride, man has drifted farther and farther from God. Humanity progressively attempts to cut loose from the moral, ethical, and spiritual standards of the Bible. It is absolutely safe to say that the average person of our day knows far less about the Bible than the common man of a half century past. What will happen as science further accelerates while man gets farther from his Creator? The possibilities are staggering.¹³

We are more educated scientifically, mathematically, hygienically, technologically, and militarily. We have walked on the moon, conquered the atom, mapped the human DNA code, eradicated smallpox, and extended the average life span far beyond that of our grandparents. At the same time, we have turned our backs on God, removed His Word from our public education system, and are well on the way to becoming a secular society completely void of God, the Bible, and religion. It seems that man has come to the conclusion that he really **can** do without God; that man, and man alone, truly **is** the master of his fate. Like his counterpart in ancient Rome, he professes to be "wise" while becoming a "fool." Perhaps the following illustrates the extent and consequence of man's pride:

The Materialistic View Of Creation

In the beginning there was man: laughing, thinking, smoking, stronger than dirt. It was he

who decided that he had created the heavens and the earth, and all the host therein. And man said, "Let there be light." And there was light. Neon lights, fl[u]orescent lights, spot lights, flash lights, laser lights, mercury vapor lights, General Electric lights, Sylvania and Westinghouse, all blinking on and off at the will of man. Man saw the light, and said, "Live better electrically." And man called the light "Common Wealth Edison," and the darkness he called "power-outage." Man looked at the earth, and said, "Let the earth bring forth green things." So, he tilled the ground, and seeded the cloud. He saw the bumper crops that he had made and he said, "Yo-Ho-Ho, I'm the Jolly Green Giant." Man split the atom, he assembled computers, he conquered the heavens. The heavens he called "space" and the earth he called "ground control." And man said, "Let there be voices in the heavens praising me for my great wisdom." And the voices came: the lunar orbiter, Tellstar and Sputnik. And man heard the voices, and nodded his head, and said, "A-OK." Then man said, "I think I will create God, in my own image. Of course, I will make him to have the same color skin that I have, and he will be like a doting father, and everything I do he will always be on my side." So man **thought** he created God. Man said, "God, I will give you dominion over one hour on Sunday, though I may sleep through part of it." Then man went back to his own selfish, greedy ways, and he blew himself up. In the end, there was only the true and living God, and His sighs were too deep for words.

Author unknown

Determination To Live Without God

The moral vacuum that our present society finds itself in is due, in large part, to its desire to free itself from the "bonds" of moral restraint imposed by the clear teaching of God's Word. The demand for ethical purity set forth in the New Testament is an "inconvenience" to those who are determined to live as they desire. Consider R. C. Sproul on this point:

It is a common occurrence among social human beings that a person who manifests a superior excellence is resented by his contemporaries. The student who consistently breaks the curve of the academic grading system is frequently treated with quiet hostility by his classmates. The unusually competent person represents a threat not only to his peers but to his superiors as well, and is frequently treated as *persona non grata*. Competency at a moral level is perhaps the most unwelcome kind of competency.¹⁴

Seeing that the Bible demands a superior ethical and moral quality of living, is it any wonder that those who are determined to live without God reject the Bible and refuse to believe its admonitions?

Let us take, as an example, the present push for homosexual rights. Though there may be an isolated instance where the homosexual community gives “lip service” to God’s Word, for the most part, the homosexual community has an aversion to the Bible. Recent legislation has been introduced into Congress to add sexual orientation to federal hate-crimes law, a development that, some observers say, would muzzle Christians who speak out against homosexuality.¹⁵ In June 2004, Senators Gordon Smith (R-Ore) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) introduced the new language to protect homosexuals from “hate speech.” It is easy to imagine a scenario in which any incident involving a homosexual can be blamed on people who have publicly opposed homosexuality. The bottom line is this: all such laws are an attempt to silence God’s Word so men can live as they like:

If people reacted with downright disgust to the moral perfection of God’s personal representative here on Earth, with what kind of dastardly disdain might they be expected to react to the moral perfection of the God Who inhabits eternity? In his 1910 book, **Man’s Need of God**, historian David Smith lamented not only the

sorry state in which mankind found itself, but the fact that “[i]t is not intellectual aberration but moral depravity—the blight of uncleanness, the canker of corruption” that has brought humans to the precipice of moral bankruptcy.¹⁶

Aldous Huxley admitted:

The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. **We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.**¹⁷

The bottom line? Some refuse to believe in God or His Word for the simple reason that they do not want any restrictions on their moral choices. They are determined to live without God, without His Holy Word as a guide for their life.

Intellectual Intimidation

Peer pressure is a powerful force, and can often sway an individual in his acceptance or rejection of a particular ideology. In the June 1999 issue of **Reason And Revelation** appeared the following letter from a young Christian who was a graduate student of a state university. His professor was a man he termed “a giant in his field...rocket-scientist intelligent...and a devout evolutionist.” Here is what the student wrote:

Working this closely with one who thinks as he does is beginning to cause not a small amount of cognitive dissonance in my own mind. Hundreds of thousands of scientists can't be wrong, can they? Consensual validation cannot be pushed aside in science. How can that many people be following a flag with no carrier, and someone not find out? I do not want to be a fool.¹⁸

The argument for rejection of God, and the Bible account of creation (and, by implication the entire system of belief) is nothing more than an appeal to the thinking of the majority for one's authority.

First, any argument based on "counting heads" is fallacious. Most Bible students are familiar with the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 7:13-14:

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.

Just because the majority believes or practices something does not make it so. Even "philosophy professors instruct their students on the various fallacies of human thought, one of which is the 'fallacy of consensus.'"¹⁹ British medical doctor Edward Jenner (1749-1823) was scorned by his peers when he suggested that smallpox could be prevented by inoculation, yet his vaccine helped eradicate smallpox. The conclusion from both of the "scientific" case studies is, as Darrell Huff observed, "People can be wrong in the mass, just as they can individually."²⁰

Second, the prestige of a position's advocates has nothing to do with whether that position is true or false. The late newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, Jr., observed that those who are pressured to conform may act "with an irrationality which is almost beyond belief." Hearst once wrote about pressures from "fashionable ideas...which are advanced with such force that common sense itself becomes the victim."²¹

Third, "the idea of strict objectivity in intellectual circles is a myth."²² Addressing this point, one scientist wrote:

While most scholars like to think of themselves as broad-minded, unprejudiced paragons of

virtue, the fact is that they, too, on occasion, suffer from bouts of bias, bigotry, and presuppositions. Nobel laureate James Watson remarked rather bluntly: “In contrast to the popular conception supported by newspapers and mothers of scientists, a goodly number of scientists are not only narrow-minded and dull, but also just stupid.”²³

Fourth, on occasion it has been the “intellectuals” who have championed some of what can only be called “crazy” concepts. Consider this example:

The eminent astro-physicist of Great Britain, Sir Fred Hoyle, proposed in his book, **Evolution from Space**, that life was planted here by creatures from outer space, and that insects are their representatives here on earth. The celebrated philosopher Rene Descartes, in his **Meditations of First Philosophy**, propounded the view that it is impossible to **know** anything (which makes one want to ask, “How does he **know** that it is impossible to **know**?”). And so on.²⁴

We must not forget that Paul warned:

not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong (1 Cor. 1:26-27).

Moses’ warning is as applicable today as when it was written more than four centuries ago: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exod. 23:2). We like the following remarks on this particular cause of unbelief:

We need not be intimidated by the pseudo-intellectualism of those who esteem themselves with higher regard than they do their Creator. Lucy, the character in the **Peanuts** cartoon strip, was correct when she told Charlie Brown, “You’re not right; you just **sound** right.”²⁵

The Will And Determination Not To Believe

One reason why men do not believe is because they are determined **not** to believe, regardless of all the evidence to the contrary. As Wilbur Smith noted:

No matter what arguments are presented to them, no matter how accurate they find the Word of God to be, how incontrovertible the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is shown to be, they do not intend to believe.²⁶

Quoting Goethe, Smith elaborated on this point:

Some will say, "No one can possibly be as stubborn as that." Yet, it is not only possible, it is continually manifested...Goethe took exactly the same attitude concerning the resurrection: "A voice from heaven would not convince me that a woman gives birth without knowing a man, and that a dead man rises from the grave."²⁷

It is difficult for us to imagine such stubborn obstinacy in the face of overwhelming evidence. But Luke records an incident that demonstrates such open rebellion and contempt for the will of God; such rebellion that will disbelieve even in the face of clear and undeniable evidence. The incident is recorded in Acts 4. The apostles had been arrested for preaching the resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:1-2). In order to "confirm the word," a miracle of healing had been performed on a certain lame man (Acts 3:1-10). The Jewish authorities, headed by Annas and Caiaphas, were perplexed as to what to do in order to stop this message of the "resurrection of Jesus Christ" from spreading any further. Luke tells us:

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these

men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it (Acts 4:15-16).

Rather than see in the miracle a confirmation of the message, these Jewish authorities willfully chose not to believe the Word, while at the same time admitting the authenticity of the evidence to support that Word. When men reach such a state of rebellion, disbelief is the only possible outcome. As the late Ira Y. Rice used to say, “You just can’t warn some brethren.”

Individual Upbringing

Many of us think the way we do because of the influence our parents had upon us in our “formative years.” One author correctly noted:

Generally speaking, mothers and fathers have not only an initial, but a continuing effect upon their offspring. Children are born with sponge-like minds that begin as “blank slates” upon which parents have a grand opportunity (and awesome responsibility) to write. It has been said that a child’s mind is like Jell-O and that the parents’ task is to put in the “good stuff” before it “sets.”²⁸

If taught properly, the seeds sown in the early years will develop a strong faith in the mind of the child, a faith that he will take with him into adulthood. On the other hand, imagine the incalculable harm done to a child’s faith when, in his early years, he is taught that there is no God, that the Bible is irrelevant, and that man is the essence of his existence. Joshua Liebman said:

I believe that much atheism has the ground prepared for it in the disillusionment with the parent which has arisen in the child. Disbelief in life, skepticism about humanity, the denial of God—all sink their roots in the soil of emotion

long before exposure to courses in philosophy and science. Life has scarred such people early and has made them unwilling to believe either in man or in God.²⁹

Parents, by their teaching and by their example, have an influence upon the spiritual temperament of their children. Unlike the atheist who actually named his child “Ima Atheist,” most parents do not **actively** teach their children there is no God, or that the Bible is not important. But how many parents, by their neglect or through misplaced priorities, lay the background for the seeds of skepticism and doubt to capture the minds of their children in later years? I fear the number is staggering!

Once, a man remarked to Samuel Coleridge, “I will not teach my child anything about religion. I will let him grow up, and when he is old enough to judge for himself, he can choose his own religion.” As the two men walked together, they paused in Mr. Coleridge’s garden. “I thought I wanted to set out some strawberry plants here this spring,” said Mr. Coleridge, “but you have given me a new idea. I think I will wait until next August. Then I will see whether it would rather have weeds in it.” The man quickly replied, “But Mr. Coleridge, the weeds will take over the place by then.” To which Mr. Coleridge responded, “My friend, the weeds will also grow unbidden in the heart of your child.” The following poem has long been one of my favorites:

I took a piece of plastic clay
And idly fashioned it one day.
And as my fingers pressed it, still
It moved and yielded to my will.

I came again when days were past,
That bit of clay was hard at last.
The form I gave it, still it bore,
And I could change that form no more.

Then I took a piece of living clay
And gently formed it, day by day.
And molded with my power and art,
A young child's soft and yielding heart.

I came again when years were gone,
It was a man I looked upon.
He still that early impress bore,
And I could change it nevermore.

We will close this point with the following quote from David Lipscomb:

For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean and not require him to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach him that the body is worth more than a pure heart and a clean and holy spirit. For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require him to study the Bible is to teach him, by a forcible object lesson, that it is more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in heaven. There is no evading this simple truth. The parent that so treats and impresses his child is the worst enemy that the child has. He will be made to feel this when he meets that child at the judgment of God. It is better to face the question honestly now.³⁰

Education

Some men refuse to believe the Bible because of the **kind** of education they have received. A “good” education is one that is balanced, addressing both the physical and spiritual part of man. Unfortunately, our public education system has been influenced largely by John Dewey’s “progressive education movement.” Dewey was a socialist and materialist and one of the founders of the American Humanist Association, formed in 1933. Because of John Dewey’s influence, the **kind** of education now being offered in many public schools has “the potential to discourage or destroy faith in God.” Belief in God and/or the Bible as the inerrant Word of God has come under attack. One very

successful tool for planting these seeds of doubt and disbelief has been the unproven, unscientific, and certainly unbiblical theory of evolution:

One reason education undoes belief is its teaching of evolution; Darwin's own drift from orthodoxy to agnosticism was symptomatic. Martin Lings is probably right in saying that "more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution than to anything else."³¹

Many people today believe in evolution because that is what they have been taught from the very first day they entered the public school system. This ungodly and anti-Biblical "theory" of origins is antagonistic to the clear teaching of the Bible. Henry Morris concluded:

The underlying assumption of progressive education was that the child is simply an evolved animal and must be trained as such...A child was considered but one member in a group and therefore must be trained collectively to fit into his or her appropriate place in society. The child's "appropriate place in society"—specifically the humanistic society that Dewey and his cohorts envisioned—neither included nor allowed for belief in the God of the Bible.³²

Since the introduction of evolution as a "proven fact of science," our public education system has slowly but methodically removed the Bible. In bygone days the Bible was held in high esteem by those who served as teachers of our precious children; now that Book of books is ridiculed and mocked. Once that book sat on the corner of every teacher's desktop; today, a teacher cannot even bring his own personal copy of the Bible onto the premises of the school grounds in his briefcase. Sadly, the **kind** of education our youth are receiving today engenders disbelief and disrespect for the Holy Bible.

Pain And Suffering

No doubt, pain and suffering have caused many a person to lose faith in the Bible and/or God:

In the mid-1960's, a devoutly religious young man from Chattanooga, Tennessee was a role model for all his classmates. He led a prayer group, and planned to become a foreign missionary—until his sister died of leukemia and his father committed suicide. The boy's belief in God collapsed, and he became one of America's most outspoken unbelievers, humanists, and pro-abortion advocates. The boy's name? Ted Turner, founder of the world-famous CNN, the Turner Broadcasting System, and other well-known media enterprises.³³

Such individuals cannot reconcile the Bible's description of a loving, compassionate, and all-powerful God with the pain and suffering endured by so many on a daily basis.

The argument goes something like this: If God were all-powerful and good, He would not permit evil. But evil exists; therefore, either God does not exist, or God is not all-powerful, or, if He is all-powerful, He is not good. The problem of evil is used to discredit the existence of God, deny the power of God, or deny the goodness of God. It is significant, we think, that the Bible actually recognizes the problem. As James Bales noted:

If, as the unbeliever argues, the presence of evil is an argument against the existence of God, is it not strange that the Bible does not try to get rid of the fact of evil through some process of denial or at least to minimize it or give some long detailed explanation of the fact of evil? The Bible, however, not only does not minimize or deny evil but it emphasizes it, makes it stand out prominently, and makes man increasingly conscious of it. It makes man more sin-conscious as is evidenced by the fact that where the influence of the Bible has gone men have become increasingly sensitive to sin, and have become

aware of the evil that is in certain courses of conduct; things which they may have hithertofore regarded with indifference or even thought were good. The nearer men get to God, as is shown by the lives of the noblest saints, the more sensitive they are to the presence of sin in their own lives and in the lives of others.³⁴

Of course, if there is no God, then who is to say what is evil and/or good? Those who reject the Bible on the basis of the evil in the world abandon the very source upon which good and evil are defined and find themselves without any explanation of what is right and wrong altogether. The fact remains that much “evil” comes into life because of the conduct of others. Many of these “evils” would disappear if men would walk in the way of love toward one another. The good often suffer as a consequence of the evil deeds of others. James Bales has pointed out:

Character is the result of the maintenance of one’s righteousness and integrity in the face of the possibility of doing otherwise; and even in the face of a penalty that may come in this world for maintaining our integrity. If God built a fence around a person when he became a Christian, and did not let any evil happen to him, there would be no testing of faith and no growth in faith. Furthermore, men would become Christians for the loaves and the fishes rather than because of love for God.³⁵

Suffering serves as a disciplinary tool to shape and mold character. It helps us to be responsible for our own actions as we reap what we have sown. And, in the final analysis, suffering teaches us that this world is not our home. The more we suffer, the more we long for that heavenly home that awaits the faithful. As one author put it, “God may deliver us by death even if He does not deliver us from death.”

Misconduct And Hypocrisy Of The Christian Community

Someone has said that hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue. Even those who are evil acknowledge the superiority of good in the very fact that those who are evil **use** the good as a cloak to cover the real nature of their evil. Hypocrisy in any area is viewed by most people as an indication of poor character. But hypocrisy in religion is looked upon as the lowest and vilest level of hypocrisy. The adage “We would rather **see** a Christian than **hear** one” applies here. We are not suggesting that one can become a child of God by merely observing the example of a faithful Christian. Somewhere along the way, a person must hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:9-15). But we must admit that our actions have the power either to draw one to Christ, or to drive him away. The “unholy” lifestyle of the so-called “Christian community” has helped engender an atmosphere of skepticism and unbelief in the Bible and in God:

Today, when Jimmy Swaggart is photographed in a midnight tryst with a prostitute, or when Jim Bakker is tried in a court of law and found guilty of fraud involving church funds, it is a dream come true for evening network television programs. And what self-respecting news anchor or late-night comedian can resist the temptation to point out that these indiscretions and crimes have been committed by “believers”? Juicy, salacious tidbits, these—made all the more prurient by the fact that they fly in the face of everything pure and holy that such people are supposed to emulate in their lives. Such hypocrisy and misconduct are hard pills to swallow even for fellow believers. But put yourself in the place of the person who already is struggling with doubts not only about the **system** of belief, but about the **God behind the system**.³⁶

James Bales likewise addressed this point:

The corruptions, or shortcomings, or the hypocrisy in the lives of some believers have been

used to justify the rejection of Christianity. They are viewed as adequate samples of the faith and since the samples are not good, the faith is viewed as being bad...[Such] contributed to the unbelief of Professor Haldane, H. G. Wells, and T. H. Huxley.³⁷

We realize, of course, that hypocrisy is not a legitimate “excuse” for rejecting the Bible. For one thing, it is contradictory for an unbeliever to attempt to justify his unbelief on the basis of such “hypocritical believers.” The very fact that he calls them “hypocrites” admits the fact that they are not living up to that which they profess. He is admitting that the Bible actually presents a higher level of living than the hypocrite is demonstrating in his life. In saying they are hypocrites, the skeptic is actually saying they are not **true** Christians. How, then, can he consistently reject the Bible on this basis? He cannot.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate that unbelief in God and the Bible has captured the thinking of our generation. Much of the success of the rise of unbelief is due to the unwillingness of men to look at and/or evaluate the evidence honestly. The real issue is not whether objections can be raised. The real issue is not whether there are some things that remain a mystery, for there are undoubtedly some things in the Bible that human reason simply cannot fathom. The real issue is not whether there are some Christians who fall short of living up to their profession.

The real issue is whether there is sufficient evidence to justify belief in the Bible as the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. Other lectures in this series set forth that proof in a most convincing way. We have sought in this lesson to address at least some of the reasons why men reject a belief in God and/or the Bible as the Word of God. When evidence is so overwhelming, and objections

are shown to be weak at best, the only logical and sane course is to believe. In the final analysis, the only reason **Why Some Refuse To Believe The Bible** is because they **choose** to do so. The skeptic has nothing to offer in exchange for the Bible; his belief has no sustaining power in the face of adversity. When he casts off the Bible, he throws away his compass, and burns his map to his heavenly home. With nowhere to turn, he flounders in the sea of confusion and disillusionment, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). We will close with this most significant quote:

When the skeptic “has found a place on this planet, ten miles square, where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted, a place where age is revered, infancy respected, womanhood honoured, and human life held in due regard—when skeptics can find such a place, ten miles square, on this globe, where the Gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundations, and made decency and security possible, it will then vindicate their views. But so long as these men are very dependent on the religion which they discard or every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob a Christian of his hope and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to men that hope of eternal life which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom.”³⁸

Endnotes

1 I have a difficult time making a distinction between why men reject a belief in the Bible, and why men reject belief in God. Many of the causes of unbelief in the Bible apply with equal force to a disbelief in God. I simply do not know how to separate the two. We have borrowed heavily, with permission, material from Apologetics Press. We have borrowed extensively from Wilbur Smith’s work, **Therefore Stand**, and from James Bales’ book, **How Can Ye Believe**. We have given credit in each case where credit is due.

2 Wilbur Smith, **Therefore Stand** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1945), p. 140.

3 Ibid, p. 142.

4 Bert Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief," **Reason And Revelation**, Vol. 19, No. 5 (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, May 1999), p. 33 (quoting Martin Gardner).

5 Stanley Sayers, **Optimism In An Age Of Peril** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 1973), p. 43.

6 James Bales, **How Can Ye Believe** (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Publishing, 1976).

7 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief," p. 35.

8 Smith, p. 146.

9 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief," p. 35 (quoting Jonathan Edwards).

10 Burton Coffman, **Commentary On Romans** (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1977), pp. 39-40.

11 Smith, p. 151.

12 These three quotes are from, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part II," **Reason And Revelation**, Vol. 19, No. 6 (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, June 1999), p. 41.

13 Wayne Jackson, "Ancient Ethics In A Modern World," **Biblical Ethics**, 6th Annual Shenandoah Lectures (Pensacola, FL: Austin McGary, 1991), p. 21.

14 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part II," p. 43 (quoting R. C. Sproul).

15 http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=40774.

16 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part II," p. 43 (quoting David Smith).

17 Ibid (quoting Aldous Huxley).

18 Ibid, p. 45.

19 Ibid, p. 46.

20 Ibid (quoting Darrell Huff).

21 Ibid (quoting William Randolph Hearst, Jr.).

22 Ibid, p. 46.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, p. 47.

26 Smith, p. 174.

27 Ibid, p. 175.

28 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part I," p. 36.

29 Ibid (quoting Joshua Liebman).

30 Source not available.

31 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part I," p. 39 (quoting Houston Smith).

32 Ibid, p. 38 (quoting Henry Morris).

- 33 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part III," **Reason
And Revelation**, Vol. 19, No. 7 (July 1999), p. 51.
- 34 Bales, p. 147.
- 35 Ibid, p. 153.
- 36 Thompson, "Causes Of Unbelief, Part III," p. 51.
- 37 Bales, p. 49.
- 38 Bales, p. 53.

CHAPTER 31

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We...?

Paul Meacham, Jr.

Commendation

I *MUST BEGIN BY THANKING* B. J. Clarke and the elders of the Southaven church for their kind invitation to participate in this lectureship and book. No brethren are dearer to my heart than those who gather in Southaven. Serving under her elders, listening to B. J. preach from week to week, and enjoying the blessed exhortation of my many friends at Southaven changed the course of my life and helped move me into the pulpit. To be a part of the good work of this church is an honor.

Introduction

Oftentimes, Jesus challenged man to live up to His claims. Jesus challenged the masses, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). When the rich young ruler expressed his willingness to do whatever was necessary to have eternal life, Jesus challenged him to make good his claim by giving up the thing in which he had placed his trust (Mark 10:21). The reason for such challenges is clear: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). In more modern vernacular, it is

not enough to “talk the talk”; one must also “walk the walk.”

This chapter is offered in the same spirit as the challenges Jesus made. I would dare say that, if asked, almost everyone who reads this chapter would claim to believe that the Bible is the Word of God. For the next few pages, I hope, through a series of questions, to challenge us to live up to that claim in tangible, measurable ways.

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We Do Not Read The Bible?

I am not surprised to learn that an atheist does not read the Bible. I am not surprised to learn that an agnostic does not read the Bible. However, I am constantly shocked to learn that members of the Lord’s church, who claim to believe that the Bible is both inspired of God and also the only guide God gave to direct man’s conduct, have not read the entire Bible and do not read the Bible daily.

Some claim that reading the entire Bible is too great a task. Hogwash! Even the slowest reader can easily read at a rate of 200 words per minute. According to those who count such things, there are about 774,000 words in the King James Version of the Bible. That means that even the slowest reader, reading for only one hour each day, can read the entire Bible in ten years.

“Ten years!” some would exclaim, as though it is unthinkable to perform a task over such a period of time. However, we make financial plans for twenty, thirty, or even forty years so we can retire and live the way we want to live. We expect our children to spend a minimum of twelve years, more often sixteen years, in school, preparing to be productive, working members of society. Is ten years too much of one’s life to dedicate to the reading of every word that God has revealed to man? Not if we really believe the Bible!

The fact is that many Christians prove, year after year, that the entire Bible can be read in a single turn of a twelve-month calendar. Most of us can read much faster than the 200 words per minute mentioned above. The Bible, written on about a fifth-grade level, can be read more rapidly than many other kinds of material. Additionally, those who begin reading the Bible for an hour every day quickly find the rate of their reading increasing and find themselves reading for longer periods of time.

Remember, the Bible is no ordinary book; it is the Word of God. It has the same power as the spoken word that framed the world (Psm. 33:6-9; Heb. 11:3), that controlled the winds (Mark 4:39), and that even now sustains the universe (Heb. 1:3). Exposing ourselves to that kind of power on a daily basis changes us for the better. It helps us fend off the temptations that come our way (Psm. 119:11; Eph. 6:11-17). It brings us peace (Psm. 119:165). It gives us understanding and direction (Psm. 119:104-105). Those who regularly read the Bible come to cherish their time with God's Word and are in no hurry to set it aside. They, like the Psalmist, declare, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psm. 119:103).

At the Central Academy church where I am honored to preach, I challenged the adult class members to read through the New Testament every month in addition to their regular Bible study. A number of members accepted the challenge. The fastest among them completes her reading in about twenty minutes a day. The slowest reader needs about forty-five minutes per day. In every case, no matter what the subject matter of the sermon, even sermons drawn from the Old Testament, they will tell me, "I just read" about that, and they have. They are beginning to see the Bible as a united book and not just a collection of disjointed stories. They are beginning to see the Old Testament as the record of God's preparation for the

bringing of the Christ to save men from their sins. They are reading the Bible because they truly believe it, and their continued reading is producing within them greater faith (Rom. 10:17). They are becoming lifelong students of the Word.

Do we really believe the Bible when we do not read the Bible? No! We might want to believe the Bible. We might truly think that we should believe the Bible. But we do not. If we believed, we would make a greater effort. We would give up one of the 8.58 hours of sleep that the average American gets. We would turn the television off for one of the 3.27 hours that the average American watches each day. We would stop trying to find time in our schedule for Bible reading, and we would make the time. Failing to read the Bible regularly is a declaration that we do not really believe that the Bible came from God.

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We Do Not Obey The Bible?

The young man Samuel was called by God to be a prophet to the people of Israel. God's call of Samuel is recorded for us in 1 Samuel 3. Three times, Jehovah called to Samuel, and the call went unanswered. Why? Why did Samuel leave Jehovah waiting three times before finally answering? Simply, Samuel lacked the needed information to answer God's call. He had not been spoken to by God before and had no reason to expect Jehovah to speak to him. God did not identify Himself when he called to Samuel, so Samuel had no way of knowing whom he should answer or how. When Eli the priest told Samuel it was God who was calling and how he should answer God, Samuel immediately obeyed. Samuel believed in Jehovah. Samuel believed in the authority of the Word of God. All Samuel needed to be obedient was the necessary information. The faithful willingness was already present. O that more of us were like Samuel!

“I know that’s what the Bible says, but...” must be some of the saddest words I have ever heard. They are usually spoken after a period of Bible study during which someone has learned from the Bible that changes are going to be necessary for him to be pleasing to God. The more difficult the changes are to implement, the more likely it is that the above words will be spoken.

For one to say, “I know...but,” places him in a hopeless situation. The situation is hopeless in the sense that what is needed must be provided by the person himself, and he has declared his unwillingness to give it. Before he learned the truth, information was needed. A teacher who cared enough about him to teach him what the Bible says could provide that. However, the one who says, “I know...but,” really does know what the Bible says. He has come face-to-face with God’s instructions, but he will not obey.

We asked, “Do we really believe the Bible when we do not obey the Bible?” I have to conclude that some who will not obey really do believe, at least mentally. During Jesus’ days on earth, “among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42). Those rulers truly did believe, but they did not obey. In like manner, today there are some who know what the Bible says and fully believe that they will be judged by what the Bible says (John 12:48). They know they are lost and fully expect to suffer the eternal fate of the unrighteous. They really do believe; they just will not change. They have become so wedded to the ways of the world that they are unwilling to gain heaven later if it means that the Word of God must rule them now. What a foolish, shortsighted outlook!

Others, however, do not obey because they really do not believe. They live their lives according to their own rules. In school, they cheat because “everyone else does

and no one cares.” In sports, they believe winning at any cost is acceptable as long as you do not get caught. In driving, the only purpose the speed limit sign fulfills is to tell them to what speed they must slow down when their radar detector beeps. In business, lying, cheating, and stealing are acceptable as long as one is wise enough to keep himself from serious legal liabilities. In marriage, sexual infidelity is perfectly understandable as long as one does not flaunt it or become unduly hurtful toward one’s mate. In religion, you make your rules, and I will make mine, and no one has the right to tell either of us what to do if we do not want to do it.

People who live in such a manner do not really believe there is an authority greater than their own desires. They do not obey the Bible because they do not really believe it has any power over them: “They are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly [appetites or desires, PM], and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:18-19).

Can we as the children of God claim to believe that the Bible is the Word of God and not obey it? No! We speak much louder with our actions than we do with our words:

If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We Do Not Teach The Bible?

Christianity is different from Judaism. A child was born into a Jewish family and, therefore, born into a covenant relationship with Jehovah. It was then necessary for his parents to teach him about the God with Whom he was in a covenant. Christianity is different. It is by God’s design that it is different:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33-34).

It is in that sense that we categorize Christianity as a “taught religion” and Judaism as an “inherited religion.”

Christianity is different from Pentecostalism. One is swept into one of the forms of Pentecostalism when he is convinced that his feelings are a direct urging from the Holy Spirit. Once convinced that God is giving him a direct leading, the modern Pentecostian subjugates everything, including what he learns from the Bible, to how he “feels” about it. It is in that sense that we categorize Christianity as a “taught religion” and Pentecostalism as a “feeling religion.”

Christianity is indeed a taught religion. Jesus preached:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, **And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father**, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45, emp. mine throughout, PM).

A foretold characteristic of the church is that God “will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). Yes, God promised that, under the New Covenant, He would put His laws into Christians’ hearts and write them in their minds (Heb. 10:16). However, the only way that happens, the only way one

can be a Christian is to hear and learn from the Word of God. Do we believe that?

If we, as a people, truly believe that the only path to heaven begins with one's learning of the Christ, it seems to me that we would be more eager to teach God's Word to others. If we really believe the Bible, we would believe that God is serious about our making "disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Since we do not do a better job of teaching our neighbors, since we are not more eager and energetic in our efforts to reach the lost, since we have fallen into the trap of measuring our fruitfulness as Christians in almost any way except how many people we have taught, I must conclude that either we do not care about the lost, we do not care about ourselves, or we simply do not believe the Bible.

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We Do Not Depend On The Bible?

Life is filled with difficult decisions. No one can instinctively know how best to respond to the many challenges life brings our way. All of us need direction, advice, and counsel to know the best path to take.

Fortunately, we have many sources of help. Parents provide us with advice born out of greater experience, because they love us. In fact, the Father of all advises us:

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Prov. 6:20-23).

Friends can help us by drawing on the areas where their knowledge and education excel ours, because true friends will tell us what we need to hear, even if we do not want to hear it: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful... Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27:6; Prov. 27:9). Our mates assist us by giving us a perspective on the various situations and on our reactions to them that we may lack or be ignoring. Doctors bring to bear their advanced specialized training. Other trained counselors exercise their skills to help us when we need help helping ourselves. But all of these can and will fail us from time to time and for a number of different reasons.

That which never fails us is the instructive counsel given by God through His Word:

Through thy precepts I get understanding:
therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a
lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path
(Psm. 119:104-105).

The commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes (Psm. 19:8).

The great mistake that man seems to make over and over is that of completely ignoring God as the source of Divine counsel. The Israelites did themselves great harm in making an agreement with the Gibeonites because they “asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (Josh. 9:14). Almost a thousand years later, Israel made the same mistake again and earned the label of the rebellious: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, **that take counsel, but not of me**; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin” (Isa. 30:1). Why do we not depend on God?

It is God’s desire that we turn to Him in times of need. Jesus lamented over the stubbornness of the first-

century Jews who would not come to Him for healing and protection (Matt. 23:37; Matt. 13:15). However, before we can successfully seek God's counsel, we must believe:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (Jas. 1:5-7).

Why do men not turn to the book that flows with the wisdom of God? In many cases, it is because we simply do not believe the Bible has any relevance to our lives or any ability to change them for the better. We do not depend on the Bible because we do not believe the Bible.

Do We Really Believe The Bible When We Do Not Defend The Bible?

The little village of Meroz is only mentioned once in the Bible, and that in the pronouncing of a curse against its inhabitants. The people of Meroz were cursed because they did not join in the battle against the Canaanites who had been oppressing their brethren. Under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, Israel was victorious. They won the battle and threw off their oppressors because they had repented and Jehovah was fighting for them. Could Jehovah win the battle without the aid of Meroz? Certainly He could. So why was it so important that Meroz join in the fight? It was important that Meroz come "to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty" (Judg. 5:23), for the benefit of Meroz, not for the benefit of the Lord.

We make application of the lessons drawn from Meroz's failure when we recognize that the Bible does not technically need me to defend it. The Word of God is Truth

(John 17:17), and, therefore, can stand on its own. Being the Word of God, it has the protection of God and the promise that it will stand for all time: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35). All attacks on the Bible are earthly and cannot stand against the Divinely produced Bible:

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

However, just because the Bible does not need my defense does not mean that I do not need to defend it. When the Bible comes under attack, I cannot sit silently on the sidelines. When the halls of academia ring with taunts against the Biblical account of the Creation, I must rise in defense of the record given by the Creator. When the voices of “political correctness” decide that the Bible’s standards are oppressive, exclusionary, and intolerant, I must accept with quiet strength the inevitable attacks that follow and speak out for the Standard by which all men will be judged (John 12:48). **For my own sake**, I must come to the defense of the Truth.

It seems that Christians would be lined up around the block for the opportunity to defend the Truth. Yet most who have found themselves in positions where the Bible was under attack have found they had to “go it alone.” Usually, others do not join in the fight because they are afraid to do so. I suppose a degree of fear is normal, but not the kind that would stop a Christian from doing what he knows to be right. For a Christian, fear is chased away by faith (Luke 8:50). The reason more children of God do not find the courage to come to the defense of the Bible is because they do not really believe the Bible is the Word of God.

The most frightening thing about man's unwillingness to come to the defense of God's Word is the tormenting punishment that will come upon those who decided to sit out the battle in silence. In Ezekiel's day, God sought for a man to stand in the gap and found none. He poured out His indignation upon them and consumed them with the fire of His wrath (Ezek. 22:30-31). If they were so punished and God allowed His children today to escape scot-free for similar sins, Jehovah would not be a God of justice. Let us not deceive ourselves. If we will not come to the defense of Truth, we can expect to have "our own way" recompensed upon our heads.

Conclusion

Should we stop saying that we believe the Bible? Certainly, we should not! What we must do is realize that saying it is not enough. We must read it, obey it, teach it, depend on it, and defend it if we expect anyone to take seriously our claims that we believe the Bible is from God. If we are not willing to do those things, honesty demands that we acknowledge that we do not really believe the Bible. What a hard thing it is to be an infidel!

CHAPTER 32

What Happens To Me If I Don't Believe The Bible?

Paul Sain

Introduction

MY ANCESTORS ARE APES! There is nothing that is morally right or wrong, all is situational or left to one's own interpretation. I have every right to declare that what I think is true and "right" and others can likewise do as they please. If indeed I do not believe the Bible, these are a few of the conclusions that accurately can be drawn! If I do not believe the Bible, if the Bible is rejected, then the alternative to man's existence on earth is the baseless, senseless, irrational "theory" of evolution, and man can do whatever he chooses.

Create in your mind this scene (if you can): a family of four (husband, wife and two children) are in a burning building. They are trapped by the raging fire below them and are seemingly doomed to perish. Quickly a fire rescue ladder truck arrives on the scene. With the ladder extended, a fireman scrambles up toward the family as the entire family hopelessly lean out the window, with flames licking around them. When the fire man and the ladder are finally in place, he urges them to come onto the ladder of safety — and they refuse! They decline the offer, turn from the fireman, and remain in the burning building! Obviously, we know that such would NEVER occur.

Yet, millions upon millions are rejecting the offer of the Saviour to rescue them, to come to the place of safety—out of the hopeless, doomed state in which we exist.

Let us approach this study in the following ways. If I do not believe the Bible (1) what blessings and benefits have I rejected (lost); (2) what loss and sorrow face me in this life, without the Bible; and (3) what ultimate consequence will I endure because of my action?

If I Do Not Believe The Bible, What Have I Done?

By choosing to reject the Bible, refusing to believe the Bible, **I have rejected the road map** that leads to an eternal mansion, the instruction Book for surviving the trials and tribulations on earth, the authority of Almighty God that will last forever (Matt. 24:35). God has graciously given all man thorough and vital instructions. Adam and Eve were told what was required of them. Noah was given detailed instructions regarding the construction of the ark. The building of the tabernacle was not left to popular opinion. And likewise today, we have the “inspired” Word of God.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God has spoken to us, through Jesus Christ:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

Can you imagine driving to a strange place, in which various roads and turns are required, and not consulting a

road map? Can you imagine someone having a road map (in such a case) and not even looking at it? Can you imagine, after an examination of the map, arguing and disagreeing with the directions? Likely none of this would occur. The Bible is our road map, to guide us from this earthly pilgrimage to an eternal heavenly home. We must consult, examine, accept and follow its directions.

If I do not believe the Bible, **I have denied myself of the greatest life possible.** Walking in the path of righteousness, treating others as you desire to be treated, loving and encouraging others are but a few of the principles by which the Christian lives. Without doubt, this life is the best life. Compare the alternative of “dog eat dog,” “survival of the fittest,” etc. The best life known to all mankind is the Christian life.

If I do not believe the Bible, **I have rejected the Biblical account of Creation, and am forced to accept the damnable theory of evolution,** regarding man’s origin. The Bible declares what God did in the creation of all things.

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ** (Eph. 3:9, all emp. mine, PS).

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: **all things were created by him, and for him** (Col. 1:16).

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for **thou hast created all things**, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:11).

If I do not believe the Bible, I am forced to accept an alternate explanation of man’s origin. Was the universe

the result of a “big bang,” and did man actually evolve (over millions of years of time) from an ape?

If I do not believe the Bible, **I must assume I have a mere earthly existence**, and have no basis for thinking I have an eternal soul. Without the Bible to properly inform me, I would not know of my “spiritual” body (1 Cor. 15:50ff) and that I will live forever somewhere (Matt. 25:46). I have nothing on which to base a belief in heaven and hell.

If I do not believe the Bible (even if I thought I have an eternal soul which needs forgiveness of sins), **I have blatantly declined the Savior’s offer of pardon** and declared that I will rely on my own resources and goodness. Even a brief examination of the Scriptures reflects the fact that man was/is lost and hopeless without a Saviour and that Jesus Christ, the Lord died once for all.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15).

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:6).

We were unable to save ourselves. We are powerless to take away our sins. We were doomed without the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

If I do not believe the Bible, **I have given victory to Satan and defeat to Jesus Christ**. The battle rages on between the forces of good and evil. Christ has voted (made possible) for our salvation from sin and an eternal home in heaven. Satan has voted that we continue in sin, live wicked lives and one day to be with him eternally in a lake of fire and brimstone. Human beings individually cast the deciding vote concerning their eternal destiny. If I am eternally

lost, all that Christ has done to make salvation possible has been worthless, of no value (as far as I am concerned).

What Blessings And Benefits Have I Rejected (Lost)?

God created man (Gen. 1). Man lived in the beautiful, bountiful, blessings of the utopian Garden of Eden. Because of sin, man was expelled from the Garden. Sin increased, to the extent that God was sorry He had created man (Gen. 6:6-8). The flood brought the destruction of evil man. God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and renewed the covenant to his descendants. From the beginning, through the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensation (age), and continuing to this day, God has always blessed man when he was obedient and punished him when he was disobedient.

In the "fulness of time" (Gal. 4:4) God ushered into reality the plan (scheme) of redemption for all man. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). The church was the means by which such reconciliation is possible. Friends, this is the final offer of God. There will not be an additional plan, another testament nor a new Savior. This is the last invitation of our Creator offered to man to come to Him for salvation so desperately needed. If we turn from Him, reject the Bible (His holy Word), then we are forever doomed! Note particularly the words found in Hebrews 10:26:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...

While it is clearly taught in Scripture that one must obey God (Acts 5:29), do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21) and that the Lord will save only those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9), salvation is certainly a "gift" of God.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15).

If I do not believe the Bible, I reject Jehovah God and all He has offered to me. The gracious, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator extends to us great spiritual blessings. The “offer” must be accepted. We must willingly, with an humble submissive heart, turn to Him for help. God will not force redemption on anyone. He will not physically restrain us from rebelling and rejecting Him. He will allow us to refuse to believe in Him and His Word if we choose to do so. But I need to know, that if I do not believe the Bible, I have rejected:

The Love Of God. God “so” loved the world that He gave. His gift was not merely angelic beings, nor things similar to earthly things. He gave “His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). The magnificent, unfathomable love of God is rudely, harshly rejected when we refuse to believe the Bible.

The Grace Of God. Paul told Titus, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). God was not obligated to provide a way of redemption, but by His mercy and grace, such was extended to all mankind.

The Instruction Of God. Timothy was told the following facts regarding the Scriptures.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That

the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The man of God can be “perfect” (complete) when he hears and follows the instructions of God. All that pertains to life and godliness has been given to man from our Father in heaven (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Jehovah has not required one thing of us but that which is for our good. When we refuse to believe the Bible, we cast aside God’s instruction to man.

The Sacrifice Of God. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He did this at a time when man was sinful (Rom. 5:8-9). Christ was willing to suffer and climactically endure a horrible death on the rugged cross for our sins (Acts 20:28). If we refuse to believe in the Bible, we consider the gift and death of the Son of God of no benefit and help. As far as we are concerned (if lost), His death was worthless to us.

The Longsuffering Of God. God has been gracious, generous and so patient with man. Soon after Creation, sin became a reality. From that time to this day in time sin has plagued all men (Rom. 3:10; Rom. 3:23). Man rebelled against God’s laws. Man flaunted God’s blessings with rash disobedience. Man blatantly disobeyed direct commands (which were for man’s good) and turned to his own selfish, sensual and stupid ways. Yet, God (to this moment in time) has continued to give man TIME and OPPORTUNITY to repent and come back to Him. He wants all men to be saved.

...For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

But friend, if we fail to believe the Bible, we seal our doom. We forever determine our destiny as the place of fire and brimstone with the devil and his angels.

What Loss And Sorrow Faces Me In This Life, Without The Bible?

It is a fact that many blessings of God are unconditionally bestowed upon all men (Matt. 5:45). The Truth further reveals that spiritual blessings are only enjoyed by those who are obedient followers of the Saviour.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Examine the contrast of being saved vs. lost, being a Christian vs. being a non-believer, accepting the Bible as your sole authority and guide vs. rejecting and turning from the Word of God. Note: Being “in Christ” we have a Saviour who walks with us (Matt. 28:20); existing “out of Christ” means we are lost, without hope in this world (Eph. 2:12; Job 7:6). With God one can have confidence and boldness (1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:21; 1 John 5:14); without God we do not have such assurance. With Christ we are optimistic and have hope (Heb. 3:6; Heb. 6:19; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:21; Col. 1:5); without Christ we are hopeless and lost (1 Thess. 4:13). Being in Christ, we have a source of strength (Psm. 28:7; Psm. 29:11; Psm. 140:7; Psm. 144:1); without Christ we are alone and left to struggle on our own.

All will one day stand at the gate of death, understanding that a transition from this life to eternity is imminent, consider the helpless and hopeless condition of one who does not believe the Bible. Without faith in God and His Word one has (according to their thoughts and beliefs) no future, nothing about which to be optimistic and happy. According to their own acknowledgment, their existence is about to end. Contrast that dismal consideration of the unbeliever to the believer, to the faithful, obedient, submissive child of Jehovah who stands at that moment about to “receive” the gift of eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15).

For God's faithful servant, the troubles of this earthly life are about to be history, gone forever. To the Christian, death will be a gain (Phil. 1:21), since the temptations and trials of Satan and his servants will no longer be a constant struggle to be faced. Death, pain, sorrow, etc. will soon be merely the "former things" (Rev. 21:4). Whatever has been endured to survive as a faithful servant will be worth it all.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (1 Pet. 4:13).

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation (2 Cor. 1:7).

Friend, the Christian life is the best. In fact, it would be the best life even if we knew there was not an eternal mansion awaiting us.

What Ultimate Consequence Will I Endure Because I Do Not Believe The Bible?

Imagine (if you can) the greatest treasure, the most valuable item known to man being in your possession. YOU were selected and charged with guarding and keeping this

treasure. Would you carelessly disregard its importance? Would you give little or no thought to what should be done in keeping this treasure safe and secure? The obvious answer is NO!

How then can millions be so careless and hapless with their soul? The soul is indisputably the MOST priceless, valuable treasure we have! The soul is not a passing item or fancy. It is not here today, gone tomorrow. It will exist forever. Our soul will be forever in heaven or hell.

God has adequately instructed and warned us of our eternal existence and the choices before us. Jehovah has stated that only those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9) and do the will of the Father will be saved eternally (Matt. 7:21). God has emphatically declared that those who disobey Him will be punished forever in torment.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:7-8).

Note what Paul said of God's goodness and severity:

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

If I do not believe the Bible, I will forever miss the prepared mansion, **HEAVEN!** John assures us of our eternal home in the beautiful words found in John 14:1-3:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

If I do not believe the Bible, my soul will not ever be in paradise. I will not know the glory of this eternal existence. I will not see the street of gold. I will never again be with any righteous ones. I will never again see, hear or enjoy precious babies.

If I do not believe the Bible, the eternal destiny of my soul will be **HELL!** The "rude awakening" (reckoning day), will abruptly jolt me to the reality that God is, God's way was the only way, and that I (at that moment) had waited too late to follow and obey Him. Thus, I will receive punishment (justice will demand it) throughout eternity.

Friend, examine once again with me the description of this horrible, gruesome, awful, spine-chilling, abominable, atrocious, unfathomable place. Jehovah (in His God-breathed Word) describes hell (Gehenna) in the following words and phrases:

1. A lake of fire.....Rev. 20:14-15
2. Unquenchable fire.....Mark 9:43-48
3. Fire and brimstone.....Rev. 14:10
4. Lake of fire and brimstone.....Rev. 19:20
5. A place of no hope.....Luke 16:26
6. A place of outer darkness.....Matt. 25:30
7. A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.....Matt. 8:12
8. A place of tribulation and anguish.....Rom. 2:8-9

- 9. A place to exist forever.....Matt. 25:46
- 10. Everlasting fire.....Matt. 18:8

If I do not believe the Bible, the ETERNAL DESTINY of my soul will be HELL! I will never know another moment without pain and torment. Hell has a beginning, but will never end! The human mind is unable to grasp and comprehend “eternity.” Many illustrations have been offered to assist us, but without doubt, all miserably fail to fathom this endless existence. Consider: (1) An ant walking around the earth, at the equator. How long would it take? (2) A sparrow flying to the moon, carrying one grain of sand at a time, and ultimately transferring tons of sand to the moon. How long? (3) How long would be required to count every blade of grass upon the face of the earth? (4) How long would it take to count and name every grain of sand or star in the sky (Heb. 11:12). (5) In our modern world, powerful computers produce facts and statistics almost instantly, yet eternity is one “fact” we cannot know or understand. (6) As we often sing, “When we’ve been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.” Yes, in any of these failing scenarios, eternity would have just begun!

If eternity was a mere 10,000 years, we could endure it, survive it. After just one day of unbelievable torment and pain, we would be able to know that we had only 9,999 years, 365 days and we would be out of that horrible place. But that will NOT be the case.

Note the terms employed in the Scriptures:

- 1. Everlasting life.....John 3:16
- 2. Eternal life.....Mark 10:29-30
- 3. Everlasting life.....John 4:14
- 4. Life everlasting.....Gal. 6:8
- 5. Everlasting life.....Rom. 6:22

- 6. Everlasting fire.....Matt. 18:8
- 7. Everlasting punishment.....Matt. 25:41-46
- 8. Eternal fire.....Jude 7
- 9. For ever.....Rev. 20:10; Rev. 22:5

If I do not believe the Bible, the ETERNAL DESTINY of MY SOUL will be HELL! I will be lost. Along with millions and millions of rebellious and disobedient ones, I will stand before God condemned and doomed. I will be numbered among the ungodly and sinful! I will have no one to blame for my condition. At that moment in time, I cannot blame:

- 1. God.....John 3:16; Rom. 1:16
- 2. Christ.....Luke 19:10; Matt. 11:28-30
- 3. Holy Spirit.....2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21
- 4. Preachers / Teachers.....Matt. 7:15; 15:14; 1 John 4:1
- 5. Family / Friends.....Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12

The truth is simple: I am accountable for my soul; I will give an account for my actions; As I accept or reject the offer of my Saviour; I will be in heaven or hell eternally because of my actions! Preachers may mislead and teach falsely or a family member or friend may influence and urge me to believe a certain doctrine, but when the final analysis is revealed—I answer to God for myself. I have no one to blame, if I am lost, but me!

If I am lost eternally, it will be a personal tragedy. To magnify that tragedy is to realize I will not be alone. There will be multiplied millions who will be lost, eternally condemned to hell forever.

The condition of being lost in hell is not reversible. Once we are damned to eternal punishment, it can not be changed. The judgment of God is final. There will be no appeals, reversing the decision, etc. The picture we have in Luke 16 is conclusive. There is a “great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:26)

between the place of paradise and the place of torment. So whether we are considering the interim place before judgment, or the final abode, there will not, can not be moving from one place to another.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, **Depart** from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting** fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....And these shall go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal** (Matt. 25:41; Matt. 25:46, emp. mine, PS).

The question has been often asked: “How can a loving God condemn anyone to hell?” The answer is multi-faceted. **(1) God is just.** His justice demands that sin has a price, a consequence (Rom. 6:23); that nothing that defiles (sinfulness) can enter into heaven (Rev. 21:27); that only the sacrifice of the Saviour would enable all men to obtain pardon from their sins (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:22). **(2) God is love** (1 John 4:8-9; 1 John 4:16). God so loved all man that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Without dispute, man cannot understand the depth of this love. **(3) God has spoken** (Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and plainly detailed what man **MUST** do to be saved from hell’s eternal torment and likewise receive heaven’s glorious home (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9). Our loving Father has offered salvation to all (Matt. 11:28-30). None are exempt. **(4) When man rejects the Word of God** (does not believe the Bible), he slams the door shut on his only escape from hell’s flames.

Conclusion

Reflect for a moment on the many reasons offered in this lecture series as to **WHY** you should believe the Bible: Inspired of God, inerrant, fulfilled prophecies, faithfully

preserved, absolute truth, and informs us of our origin, purpose and destiny. The Bible is far superior to man's creeds and theories. It is logical and sensible to believe in God and His inspired Word regarding man's origin, purpose and destiny. It is irrational and foolish to accept man's concoctions, rantings and ramblings regarding his origin, purpose and destiny.

If I do not believe the Bible — I will be eternally lost and will have lost anything and everything of any importance!

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**Lectures
For
Ladies**

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CHAPTER 33

What The Bible Has Done For Women

Tish Clarke

Introduction

AS ALWAYS, IT IS an honor and a privilege to speak on the **POWER** Lectures. First, I wish to thank my husband for this assignment, and secondly, the elders for their invitation. My family is tremendously blessed to be able to work and worship with the Southaven church. It is not often that a “preaching family” is able to raise their children in only one location, as we have been blessed to do. We are thrilled to have a truly wonderful association with the fine Christians here at Southaven. We wish for many more years together.

In researching my topic, I was dismayed at the many false concepts of God’s beautiful treatment of womankind. It amazed and sickened me to read the various thoughts of misguided individuals as to the alleged bias of Paul toward women¹. Another grievous error taught is that woman is beneath man, **according to God**.² Much was recorded about God’s **inferior woman** versus the pagan god’s **complete woman**.³ Finally, a battle is being fought in the church concerning the **modern role of women**. Too many of our own brethren are teaching a need for us to get even with the times, and utilize the vast resource of female preachers that the culture of our day would allow.⁴

It is my plan to discuss what the Bible has done for women in the following four areas: (1) a look at God's view of the woman He created; (2) a look at the cultural treatment of women in the Ancient East; (3) a look at Christ's view and how He elevated women in the New Testament; and (4) a look at the changing role of women in the church of the modern age.

A Look At God's View Of The Woman He Created

Woman was created to be a helpmeet to man (Gen. 2:18), and not as a slave, or to be held as substandard in any way. The first woman, Eve, was given a special role: to take care of and walk beside the man, both being created in God's image. Through the influence of man and Satan, womanhood took a drastic change in the world. Man abused the role that God planned for males and females. Through Satan's sway man began to treat woman as inferior and flawed. This can be seen as early as the Garden of Eden. Adam's response to God's question of why they had eaten of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil indicates the beginning of the seeds of superiority. He answered God in Gen. 3:12: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Adam is shirking his responsibility of the sin and blaming **that woman God gave him**, as if she was indeed second-rate. God never intended for man to think of woman as less than equal to him. Was she to be in subjection to the man? Yes! However, this does not indicate inequality. It simply means that woman was to be guided by the husband and should acquiesce to his authority as the head of the house. Owen Olbricht states:

Understanding God's intention in this case is important, because the New Testament alludes

to and teaches truths concerning woman's role based on this event in the Garden of Eden. A misunderstanding of the penalty after the transgression may lead to a misunderstanding of other passages from the Scriptures.⁵

This understanding of God's penalty and the subjection of women will be pivotal to the fourth point of this lesson.

Woman is described in the Bible in the following ways: (after her creation God looked at the created and it was) very good (Gen. 1:31). Other passages describe women as: trustworthy (Prov. 31:11); gracious (Prov. 11:16); virtuous (Prov. 12:4); honorable (Acts 17:12); holy (1 Pet. 3:5); and the glory of man (1 Cor. 11:7). Nowhere in God's Word do we read of the inferiority of women. God's law was very clear about how women were to be respected. Leviticus 20:9 and Deuteronomy 27:16 both deal with not cursing father **or mother**. Both are considered honored and a child that would disrespect **either one** was to be put to death. Mothers were considered equal with fathers in many Old Testament passages (Exod. 20:12, Prov. 1:8; Prov. 6:20; and Prov. 10:1). Mothers were to be obeyed (Deut. 21:18), cared for (Prov. 23:22), and praised (Prov. 31:28-31). God's created woman was certainly not considered a mere possession; she was to be protected and cherished. Jacob was concerned for the plight of his wives and children (not just the sons) when he knew Esau was looking for him (Gen. 32:11). Women were to be loved and protected because they possessed a soul just as man (Gen. 1:26).

It is interesting to note that women in the Bible were not:

merely child-rearers, staying "in the kitchen" all of their lives...They were artists, skilled-weavers, rebuilt the Wall of Jerusalem, were involved in business, manufactured and sold linen garments (Exod. 15:20; Judg. 21:19-21; 2 Chron. 35:25;

Exod. 35:25-26; Neh. 3:12; Prov. 31:16; Prov. 31:24).⁶

Also, women were judges, prophetesses, and queens. The names of these women will remind us of the strength of their characters: Deborah (Judg. 4:4-5), Miriam (Exod. 15:20; Num. 12:2), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and Esther (Esth. 2:15-20). There are women of power and faith: Sarah (Heb. 11:11), Rahab (Heb. 11:31), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:3), Ruth (Ruth 1:16-18), Vashti (Esth. 1:9), and Jael (Judg. 4:17-22). “Women of such character stood out as great servants of God. They found their greatness in service, not in lordship. Through their service they stood taller than most rulers, kings, governors, and princes.”⁷ The women of the Bible embodied the spirit of what God had created and intended for woman to be on this earth. In the third point much will be said of the women of the New Testament—they have not been left off of the above lists by mistake. After creation, womanhood suffered greatly at the ideologies of philosophers, rulers, and man in general. As we will see in the next point, they were rarely esteemed and often abused. Clearly what Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 55:8-9 is a true statement: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

A Look At The Cultural Treatment Of Women In The Ancient East

It is difficult to have a clear and precise understanding of the lives that women led in the past, as much historical writings center around war, and empires won and lost. In this arena obviously women did not play a major role. However, certain aspects can be gleaned from

looking at the writings of Greek mythology, Plato, and Aristotle. The goddesses and characters of mythology shed a great deal of light on the treatment and respect, or lack thereof, given to women. In nearly every society, women were often regarded as property and were considered as nothing more than a vessel to bear children.

Mt. Olympus was home to the treasured Greek gods and goddesses of mythology of the ancient writings of Homer and others. From their perch, high above the world, the gods would look down upon the mere mortals and rule the universe. Man was seen as a pawn in their lives and often used for various purposes to suit the fleeting whims of the various “deity.” A brief description of the relevant character traits of a few of the gods and goddesses will enlighten the viewpoint of women in this era, and also relay the lack of morality.

1. Gaea – the Earth goddess. She mated with her son, Uranus to produce the remaining Titans.

2. Rhea – wife of Cronus. He made it a practice to swallow their children. She saved her twelfth child, Zeus (finally!), from her husband. She does not appear to be endowed with a very maternal instinct!

3. Zeus – the most powerful god of Mt. Olympus. Zeus had a wife, Hera, and many other lovers. One woman did not satisfy him, and goddesses and mortal women alike were used to satiate his lust.

4. Hera – wife and sister to Zeus. She was solely a vessel to bear children and yet not the only one to bear his children. Many myths tell of her bitterness and revenge she sought against Zeus for his many infidelities.

5. Aphrodite – the goddess of love and beauty. She may have been the daughter of Zeus and the Titan Dione.

6. Athena – the goddess of wisdom. The only goddess in Greek mythology to be something other than

beautiful and a child bearer. She was the offspring of Zeus and Metis. While she was pregnant with Athena, Metis was eaten by Zeus because he did not like a prophecy she told him. When it was time for her birth, she exited through Zeus' forehead, fully dressed in battle regalia.

7. Hestia – goddess of the hearth (a fireplace at the center of the home) and sister to Zeus. She was the tenderest of the goddesses and does not play a role in many myths. It would appear the home was not worth writing about in many of the myths.

8. Demeter – the goddess of the harvest and sister to Zeus. Her daughter was forced to live with Hades (god of the underworld) each winter.

9. Pandora – a beautiful woman created by the gods. She was sent as a gift to Epimetheus (to punish him) from Jupiter. In her foolishness, she opened a beautiful box and released all the diseases, sorrows, vices, and crimes that afflict poor humanity. She was to be used to snare Epimetheus in her beauty and deceit.

10. Typha – a female monster who was created to afflict the gods.

11. Echidna – a female monster in the form of a viper, half-snake, half-woman.⁸

It is clear from the various ways female goddesses and characters were portrayed that the ancient writers of mythology did not value womankind to any great extent. A very few of the female characters were shown in an honorable and respectable manner. Most women were used as things to fulfill the desire to procreate. They were viewed as mere objects while the male gods or mortals played the more vital role in the universe. Or, the female characters in mythology were deceitful, snares, and evil monsters. In either case, they were not treated with any great deal of value, which reflected the view of womanhood at the time.

One must realize the emphasis that ancient Greeks placed on the mythological poetry of men like Hesiod and Homer. They were held in reverence and their works carried the same importance as **The Holy Bible** did centuries later....Therefore, how Hesiod and Homer portrayed women was very significant and had repercussions on subsequent generations.⁹

Unfortunately, idol worship in the Bible was rampant among the Jewish nation. The Canaanites worshipped many pagan gods, one of which was Baal. Baal was closely related to his female counterpart—the Greek Aphrodite. Jeremiah 2:20 speaks of the idol worship of Israel:

For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

The Pulpit Commentary details that this was idolatrous worship of Baal:

Bare, treeless heights were favorite spots for sacrifices, especially for Baal; groves, and leafy trees, in general, for the lascivious rites of Asherah and Ashtoreth. The apparently extreme statement of the prophet is not to be minimized. Travelers still tell us of vestiges of ancient and doubtless pro-Christian idolaters worship still visible on almost every attractive spot in the open country in Palestine. Under every green tree.¹⁰

The pagan rituals had tainted the chosen people of God and its women were in the grip of acts of fornication in worship to a pagan god.

The Greek viewpoint on the status of women was very poor. St. Clement of Alexandria wrote: “Every woman

should be filled with shame by the thought that she is a woman.”¹¹ They were confined to their parental home until a husband was chosen. She had a *kyrios* (guardian) who controlled every instance about her life. She could not own property, make decisions, or enter into any contracts. After marriage, she would then begin her life of bearing and rearing children. Usually, of the children born, the sons and only one daughter would be raised within the family. Any other daughters born were prepared for a life of prostitution or slavery. The wife did not socialize with her husband, even if the party took place in her own home, and often had separate quarters away from him. She would be secluded with the children and slaves of the household. Any dealings in the marketplace were off-limits to her as this was reserved for men and women slaves.

Two of the better known philosophers of Greek history, Plato and Aristotle, held very little regard for the status of women. They were considered “the two most influential philosophers, both in the Graeco-Roman world into which Christianity was born and in the world of Christian theology of the Middle Ages.”¹² With this in mind it is essential to know what their writings held about women. Plato appeared to wish for a different status of women in his writing, **Republic**, in which he “foresees an upperclass of ‘guardians’ among whom the chattel status of women is abolished (i.e. she is no longer owned by her husband) and in which women were to receive equal education to men.”¹³ However, he also clearly viewed a lower status of women as due to their inferior human nature:

It is only males who are created directly by the gods and are given souls. Those who live rightly return to the stars, but those who are ‘cowards or [lead unrighteous lives] may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation.’ This downward progress may continue through successive reincarnations unless reversed. In this situation,

obviously, it is only men who are complete human beings and can hope for ultimate fulfillment; the best a woman can hope for is to become a man.¹⁴

Plato appears to be double minded in his view of womankind. In some writings he clearly favored a better deal for women, and in others it was quite clear he viewed them as rightfully inferior to men.

Aristotle, on the other hand, had no qualms in stating his belief that women were beneath men. In his view, men held the 'life' of mankind in his sperm, and women only possessed the 'matter.' Therefore, man was superior by nature of his ability to create a complete human being (the brain and soul). The housing material provided by the woman (the 'matter') for the brain and soul were quite inferior to what man brought to the equation of making a baby. Aristotle was quite mistaken in women's role of procreation! Aristotle believed that because of man's superior intelligence, woman is solely dependent upon him and as such should be ruled by man.

It is best for all tame animals to be ruled by human beings. For this is how they are kept alive. In the same way, the relationship between the male and the female is **by nature** such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled.¹⁵

Aristotle further writes that a woman and a slave are of equal status and as such both belong to the man to do with whatever he chooses. He viewed the inferior status of woman, slaves, and animals as their destiny to fulfill. He believed the soul was connected to the body and was tiered according to the status of the person which possessed it. Therefore, slaves and women had less of a soul than superior man.

Since Greece is considered the culture that gave birth to democratic ideas it is truly sad to realize the inhumane

and inequality of its treatment of womankind. If a woman was not in the category of wife or potential wife, she was left in the degrading category of prostitute, concubine, and slave. To be a wife did not afford a woman much better than the second category. It was said: "the best wife, according to one writer, was the one, of whom the least was said, whether it be good or bad."¹⁶ Women in Athens were not given the chance to have an education, which was beyond the scope of household duties. Considering all that Greece offered in education, this disparity is truly sad.

Athens was the leading city in Greece...During the "Golden Age" of Greece (roughly 500 BC to 300 BC) it was the Western world's leading cultural and intellectual center, and indeed it is in the ideas and practices of Ancient Athens that what we now call "Western civilization" has its origins.¹⁷

It is evident that the Grecian society, in which Christ and the apostles taught, desperately needed His teachings on the true intentions of God when He created woman. Ed Casteel wrote in the 1990 POWER journal:

Under pagan influence the high and lofty position of womanhood disappeared, she became the slave of her husband, just a possession for him to use or abuse as he willed. Under the Christian system womanhood is elevated to the throne that God intended from the beginning.¹⁸

A Look At Christ's View And How He Elevated Women In The New Testament

Clearly the society to which Jesus came desperately needed His teaching on the beauty and value of womanhood. The world had created a second-class for women and even instances recorded in the Old Testament documented situations in which women were depersonalized. James A. Borland states:

But such indications do not equal endorsement. God never authorized or approved behavior that depersonalized women. There are other things recorded in Scripture such as child sacrifice, polygamy, ritualistic sex in religion, and wife abuse that have never been sanctioned by God. The cultural mores and the historical setting into which God spoke His revelation must be distinguished from that revelation itself. Only God's Word is inspired, not human folkways and customs.¹⁹

Christ quoted Genesis 1:27 in Matthew 19:4: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female." Christ placed equal value on women as the Father had intended it to be from the beginning. Christ manifested this truth in His life and work in the four Gospels. John 4:27 depicts His disciples amazement in "that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?" Consider the chart on the next page, which details how His ministry involved women.

This chart clearly shows that He spoke to women in public, something unheard of in this era of time. Also, He addressed them in a thoughtful and compassionate manner. He spoke of them as "daughters" giving them a spiritual status equal to men, both were children of Abraham. In teaching on divorce, He regarded them as people with value, not as property or objects. The disciples were taught not to avoid women, as the manner of the day (tradition, not command) had been; but to discipline their thoughts and to control their lusts:

A rabbi would not speak to any woman in public, not even to his own mother. Some Pharisees would not even look at a woman in public; so they shut their eyes whenever a woman came into view! A woman was the property of her husband. Adultery was against her husband or father, not against the woman.²⁰

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS DONE FOR WOMEN

Jesus' Treatment of Women in the Gospels	
Woman	Scripture
He regularly addressed women while in public:	
Samaritan woman	John 4:7-26
Woman taken in adultery	John 8:10-12
Widow of Nain	Luke 7:12-13
Woman with a bleeding disorder	Luke 8:48; Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34
Woman from the crowd	Luke 11:27-28
Crippled woman	Luke 13:12
Women in route to the cross	Luke 23:27-31
How He spoke to the women He addressed:	
Woman with a bleeding disorder	"daughter"
Crippled woman	"daughter of Abraham"
Widow of Nain	"compassion on her"
Women in route to the cross	"daughters of Jerusalem"
He held them personally accountable for their sin:	
Woman at the well	John 4:16-18
Woman taken in adultery	John 8:10-11
Sinful woman	Luke 7:44-50
His equality of women was seen in His view of divorce and lust:	
Social contact with women	Matt. 5:28 - not told to avoid women
Disciplined men's thoughts on lust	Matt. 5:28 "looketh on a woman"
Treatment of divorce	Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18

Christ taught His disciples, and the listening audience, by the manner in which He addressed and treated women, that they are due respect and honor as God had intended it from the beginning.

Christ tenderly aided women in their physical infirmities in the same way He ministered to men. He tenderly addressed the woman with a bleeding disorder (which had caused her to be ceremonially unclean for twelve years) as “**daughter**.” By addressing her as daughter, He gave her the same spiritual status as men, as He publicly strengthened her faith and then bid her to go in God’s peace. Jesus touched a dead girl at Jairus’ house and restored her to her mother and father. Christ commended the Syrophenician woman for her great **faith** (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). This phrase was used only one other time: to the centurion (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9), thereby bestowing equal honor to a man and a woman. Christ showed love and great compassion for His mother when dying on the cross as He publicly left His mother’s care to John (John 19:26-27).

Christ aided women in their spiritual needs. In John 4, when He spoke to the Samaritan woman, she asked Him: “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” He spoke to her because He offered her the chance at everlasting life: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” The same gift of eternal life was offered to man and woman. An interesting contrast is seen between the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus of chapter 3: “He was secretive; she was open. He doubted; she accepted.”²¹ Also, when the woman from the crowd said, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked,” Christ listened to her and brought her to a more spiritual understanding: “But

he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it (Luke 11:27-28).” Christ affirms that women have souls equal to men and therefore are entitled to the same spiritual gifts from the Father of eternal life. As early as Aristotle, and in the centuries following Christ, it was debated whether women had souls: “As early as the sixth century a council at Macon (585 A. D.), fifty-nine bishops taking part, devoted its time to a discussion of this question, ‘Does woman possess a soul?’”²² Had man only listened to God there would have been no need for this continual degradation of woman.

In His teachings, Jesus often used women in His illustrations. He spoke of the women and the men that would be going about their daily tasks and how they would be divided and judged over their relationship to Christ (Matt. 24:41; Luke 17:34-37). Jesus used the ten virgins to show a readiness, or lack thereof, for Christ’s kingdom (Matt. 25:1-13). He showed a shepherd looking for the one lost sheep, and the woman searching her home for the lost coin; Jesus used a man and a woman to illustrate God’s seeking the lost and rejoicing over their salvation (Luke 15:1-10; Matt. 18:12-14). Countless other illustrations concerning women in an equal role with men were used by Christ. He was also concerned that women should be allowed to sit under His teaching and learn (Luke 10:38-42; John 11:20-27). This was very unusual in this period of history.²³

Many women assisted Jesus in His ministry, and they and others were seen at the resurrection. Some of the women who aided Christ were: Anna of Asher (Luke 2:25-38), Mary His mother (Luke 2:41-51; John 2:1-12; Matt. 12:46-50; and John 19:25-27), a sinful woman (Luke 7:36-39), and the women who traveled with Him—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Mary, and Salome (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:41; and Luke 8:3). Finally, women were

used as witnesses to the resurrection (Matt. 28:5-8; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:2-9; and John 20:1-2). In Christ's time period women were not considered reliable witnesses. Even Josephus, an historian during the time of Christ, wrote:

In Christ's day, women were not considered reliable witnesses. Josephus warns, for example, "But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on the account of the levity and boldness of their sex." Still, God chose to use women as His initial witnesses to His disciples.²⁴

It is interesting to note that all four Gospels record their compassionate trip to the tomb and witness to the resurrection. God used these women as reliable witnesses, in that day, and for the centuries to follow.

I would be remiss in this section if I did not write concerning, **The Da Vinci Code**²⁵, by Dan Brown. The book was on the bestseller list for 32 weeks and has inspired a new movie starring Tom Hanks which will come out in a few months. In an article written for **Christianity Today**, the following is stated:

The central claim Brown's novel makes about Christianity is that "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is **false**." Why? Because of a single meeting of bishops in 325, at the city of Nicea in modern-day Turkey. There, argues Brown, church leaders who wanted to consolidate their power base (he calls this, anachronistically, "the Vatican" or "the Roman Catholic church") created a divine Christ and an infallible Scripture—both of them novelties that had never before existed among Christians.²⁶

This book tries to destroy the Divinity of Christ, and relegates Him to be just a mere man. In doing this they have given Him an entire life that is not recorded in the Bible. There are many different falsehoods taught in this

book, however we will center on the one that pertains to this study of women. Brown falsely claims that the Vatican erased all Scripture which pointed to the **truth** (?) that Christ was a married man to Mary Magdalene. It also claims that Mary was a Divine being, a goddess of the “divine feminine.” All of this is put forth as complete fact, and he writes as if his sources are impeccable. Consider the following quote from the novel:

“The Grail,” Landon said, “is symbolic of the lost goddess. When Christianity came along, the old pagan religions did not die easily. Legends of chivalric quests for the Holy Grail were in fact stories of forbidden quests to find the lost sacred feminine. Knights who claimed to be “searching for the chalice” were speaking in code as a way to protect themselves from a Church that had subjugated women, banished the Goddess, burned non-believers, and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine.”²⁷

The book tries to bring in much of the nonsense associated with pagan religions and make it a part of Christianity. The following was on a website and stated as fact: “Did you know that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and had three children—a daughter (Tamar), born in 33 AD after the crucifixion, and two sons, one born in 37 AD (Jesus Justus) and one born in 44 AD.”²⁸ This is exactly the kind of false information that **the Da Vinci Code** pours forth from its pages, and anyone not grounded in the Truth of the Bible will have their foundation rocked with this blatantly bogus book. Through a very cleverly written novel, Brown twists the facts of the actual occurrence of the Nicene Council in 325 A.D., and the men who attended, with many falsehoods which are presented as truth. Even though it is Catholicism that Brown is denigrating through this novel, the average person may

associate any form of Christianity with the lies. The church needs to be able to stand and fight for the Truth to be told. Christians need to be very clear on the fact that the Bible is the **complete** Word of God, Gnostic versions are **wholly false**, the Christ set forth in the Word **embodies the entirety** of what the Spirit intended for mankind to know about Him, and **Christ is completely and wholly Divine**.

A Look At The Changing Role Of Women In The Church Of The Modern Age

It has been pointed out that Christ valued women highly and elevated them to the status intended at Creation. However, some would try to teach that Paul and Jesus differed on their teachings about the role of women. By inspiration, Paul recorded the following verses:

1 Cor. 14:34: Let your women **keep silence in the churches**: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

1 Cor. 11:3: But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the **head of the woman is the man**; and the head of Christ is God.

1 Tim. 2:11-15: Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But **I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence**. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Since Paul taught that whatever we do must be authorized by the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17) it is essential to see if he followed after Christ's doctrine, authority, and

example. There is no command in the New Testament which authorized women to preach in a mixed assembly of men and women, or to hold any form of a leadership role over men. Some would view Paul's writings, in these verses, as a condemnation against the ability of women, and would suggest that his teaching once again lowered the status of women to what it was before Christ came to the earth. This belief is far from the truth. First, it must be proven that Christ commanded or allowed women to preach to a mixed assembly. Second, it must be proven that Christ commanded or allowed women to be in leadership roles over men during His ministry. Neither of these statements is true and there is no Scripture to support women preaching/serving in leadership over men.

A look at Christ's ministry will show that while He valued women greatly, He had in mind a clear role distinction between men and women.

Nowhere is this issue seen more clearly than in Jesus' selection of only men for the role of apostle. Many Biblical feminists question the significance of this obvious role distinction, or explain it as cultural or as temporary.²⁹

Christ went against social customs whenever they went against the Law. A few examples of His ministry in which He went against societal norms are the following: He criticized the Pharisees in public (Matt. 23:13-36), He healed on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-27), He cleansed the temple (John 2:14-17), He spoke to the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-9), and He ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:11). The fact that Christ did not appoint any women to be apostles had nothing to do with the social customs of the time. He had a specific job for women and one outlined for men. The apostles were the first form of leadership in the first century church, and they were given

the power to rule in Christ's church. Christ promised them that they would sit on thrones and rule over the twelve tribes, the church. "No woman in Christ's ministry was called, commissioned, or named as an apostle, or even performed in the role of an apostle. These roles and functions Christ reserved for men."³⁰ Even after the resurrection, it should be noted that when a replacement apostle was needed, a man was chosen. In Acts 6, the church was told to select seven qualified men, not women, to take the lead in helping needy widows. From these examples it is obvious the early church held to the teachings of Christ on role distinctions. Nowhere do we see Christ teaching, authorizing, or showing by example an expanded role of women.

So, in reality, did Paul issue a new command? Absolutely not! He used his apostolic authority to restrict a woman from teaching over a man or to usurp authority over a man—in the same manner that Christ had already established this principle. This was nothing new to the early church. Christ had already laid the foundation. It appears that some of the women at Corinth were disrupting certain assemblies of the church and it was necessary for Paul to clearly state the command in his letters. In so doing, he has received a lot of condemnation for his supposedly hateful stance!

We tend to think the role of women is a modern problem facing our society and the Lord's church. However, the battle over gender roles in the religious world has been fought for many years. Read the following quotes from two well known female atheists from the turn of the century:

I know of no other book that so fully teaches the subjection and degradation of women. When women understand that governments and religions are human inventions; that bibles, [sic] prayer-books, catechisms, and encyclical letters

are all emanations from the brain of man, they will no longer be oppressed by the injunctions that come to them with the divine authority of "thus saith the Lord." It is often asserted that woman owes all the advantages of the position she occupies today to Christianity, but the facts of history show that the Christian Church has done nothing specifically for woman's elevation. In the general march of civilization, she has necessarily reaped the advantage of man's higher development, but we must not claim for Christianity all that has been achieved by science, discovery and invention--**Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)**.

Women are indebted today for their emancipation from a position of hopeless degradation, not to their religion nor to Jehovah, but to the injustice and honor of the men who have defied his commands. That she does not crouch today where St. Paul tried to bind her, she owes to the men who are grand and brave enough to ignore St. Paul, and rise superior to his God. Every injustice that has ever been fastened upon women in a Christian country has been "authorized by the Bible" and riveted and perpetuated by the pulpit--**Helen Gardner, (1853-1925)**.³¹

Unfortunately, many in the Lord's church are struggling with the idea that to practice the teachings of Christ and Paul makes for an old-fashioned, out-dated people that can no longer reach the masses. Years ago, during the restoration movement, some of the churches advocated female preachers and leaders in the church. One such woman was Clara Babcock. She was a devout Methodist and heard George F. Adams preaching in Sterling, IL. When he challenged her to find the authority for how the Methodists practice salvation, she discovered their doctrine was different than the Bible. In her biography she is quoted as saying to her Methodist Pastor "How much does the church teach that is not in the Bible? If you have

one human plan, how shall we know the divine plan? It weakens my faith."³² If she had only listened to her own statement, she would never have become a female evangelist. She is a stumbling block to this day. Here is a letter written to the **Christian Standard**, May 8, 2005:

Alan LaRue ("How Can They Hear Without a Preacher?" January 30) was right on target in focusing on the need for more preaching ministers, but he left off one possible solution: the many committed, trained, and gifted women who would preach if they had an opportunity.

Just over a century ago there was a similar shortage of preachers, especially in the Midwest. Not too many miles from where Mr. LaRue preaches, Clara Babcock helped to fill that shortage. She served for 36 years, preaching in Erie and Thomson, Illinois. Her obituary (**CHRISTIAN STANDARD**, 25 July 1925, p. 1045) noted that she was ordained in 1888 and had baptized 1,502 persons by the time of her death.

Yes, women's preaching is controversial now, just as it was a century ago, but that does not mean we ought to be hush-hush about it. Mission support has been a controversial issue over the years (direct support vs. mission agencies), but our churches have learned to live with this disagreement.

Instrumental music has been controversial, but Christian churches/churches of Christ are, more and more, willing to leave this issue in the realm of opinion. Our congregations will not soon—perhaps never—have consensus on whether the preaching ministry is a valid exercise of the gifts and calling of women, but it is one more possible solution to our pressing need for more preachers. Who is ready to open the door to the Clara Babcocks of our time? --Robert Hull, Johnson City, Tennessee³³

The following is a quote from the editor of the **Christian Standard** in response to this liberal letter writer:

There is the old Bartchy [Bartchy was a first century preacher for the Christian church, TC] approach to this, which is to "ask new questions" of the Biblical text--questions carefully crafted to reach the desired goal of having the Biblical text "answer" that, sure, women should teach men. With that, the church has "caught up" with our culture and all is well. But another approach is to ignore scripture - which does after all contain some of those nasty, chauvinistic Pauline texts that have to be carefully reinterpreted - and just appeal to other things.³⁴

The **Christian Standard** is a Christian Church publication. Just as the Lord's church has battled with a liberal and a conservative element—so, too has the Christian Church. As can be seen from the letter above, The Christian Church is battling the Biblical role of women. It is profoundly sad that the Lord's church is headed for a possible split over the role of women in the church. Rubel Shelly stated: "Some of the overtones of the cultural pressures related to sexism are challenging the church to rethink its traditional posture about women."³⁵ Many of the churches of Christ are doing just that—rethinking its traditional posture. That statement alone negates the right to think about this issue. The role of women in the church is not a **traditional posture!** It is a command of God and as such there is **no rethinking allowed!** Consider the following purpose statement for the website of the West Islip Church of Christ:

The purpose of this site is to promote gender justice in the Church of Christ by...facilitating communication and mutual support and edification among Churches of Christ that practice or strive toward gender justice. Offering resources for those seeking insight into the scriptural, theological, and experiential warrants for gender justice in the church...In general, gender justice means recognizing that men and women are created by God, redeemed

by Christ, and gifted by the Spirit truly without distinction or partiality. In Christian community, gender justice means encouraging both men and women to exercise their Spirit-given gifts in the church's work, worship, and leadership, and celebrating the truth that the Spirit grants such gifts without respect to gender. Concretely, gender justice in the Church of Christ includes opening traditionally masculine leadership roles and activities (deacon, elder, minister, worship leader, preacher, teacher, etc.) to women, and encouraging men to discover and cultivate their gifts for activities traditionally performed by women.³⁶

The above quote was written by Katie Hays, co-minister at the West Islip Church of Christ, on Long Island, New York. She also edits the news page for Gal328.org.

The church needs to stand courageously and battle this issue. It is time to realize that women are important to the church **in the role wherein God has ordained them to serve in**. The declaration that the conservative element of the church is behind the times and denigrates women must be answered. Women have been given a glorious job in the church. We are commanded in Titus 2:3-5 to live a pure and holy life, and to reach out and guide the younger women in various areas of their life:

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Surely, with the knowledge that the home is the heart of spiritual teaching outside of the church, we women can

find plenty of work to do in a manner which would exemplify the Word of God and not strive to change His commands for our own self-serving attitudes. May the Word of God never be blasphemed in our lives and the manner in which we conduct our spiritual life before the church.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.thecra.org/Strange%20Club/Miscellany/Hushing%20Up%20Women%20Preachers.htm>
- 2 <http://www.undelete.org/library/library0041-273.html>
- 3 <http://northernway.org/mmag.html>
- 4 <http://www.piney.com/ShellyAssembly.html>
- 5 Owen D. Olbricht, **Woman: A Biblical Quest** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1998), p. 35.
- 6 http://www.despatch.cth.com.au/despatch/vol164_poorlight.html
- 7 Olbricht, p. 49.
- 8 <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0881990.html>
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- 11 <http://voi.org/books/hvhb/ch7.htm#50>
- 12 http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/infe_gre.asp
- 13 Ibid.
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- 18 POWER Gospel Journal, Spring, 1990 Volume One, Number two, "The Role of Woman: Her Responsibility as the Queen of the Home," Ed Casteel, p. 44.
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30 Ibid.
31 <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/stanton.htm>
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33 <http://www.thecra.org/Strange%20Club/Miscellany/Hushing%20Up%20Women%20Preachers.htm>
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CHAPTER 34

What The Bible Requires Of Women

Bonnie Ruiz

Introduction

IN THINKING ABOUT THE title of this lesson I remembered the passage in Deuteronomy 10:12-13:

And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

We, like Israel, have no worthiness in ourselves apart from God. God is the One Who has given us the great plan of salvation, giving us His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to suffer and die in our place, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Let us put our name in place of the word “Israel.” “And now **Bonnie**, now that thou hast everything without deserving it or being worthy of it, purely from God’s forgiving grace, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? To fear Him, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Him with all the heart and all the soul.” The demand for fear, love and reverence towards the Lord is not easy for the natural man to fulfil and even harder the deeper it goes into our

heart; but after such manifestations of the love and grace of God, how can we do anything else but fear, love and reverence Him. The fear of the Lord, which springs from the knowledge of our own unholiness in the presence of our holy God, ought to form the one leading emotion in our heart prompting us to walk in all His ways. Let us now look at some of the specific things God requires of women.

The Bible Requires Women To Stay Within Their Role

The Bible teaches women that we have a specific role in the church and requires us to stay within that role. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 says:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also sayeth the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 says, “Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be silence.”

In the church today some believe that it is Scriptural for a woman to translate a sermon in a mixed assembly. It may be reasoned that there are times when qualified men are not available, so a woman translator is a necessary expedient. We must remember to ask the question: “Is a woman authorized to teach God’s Word in a public assembly before a mixed audience? There is no such passage or example; therefore, there is no authority for such. In 1 Corinthians 14:13-40 is the discussion of speaking in tongues in a mixed assembly of the church. In 1 Corinthians 14:27-28, Paul tells them “if any man speaks in a tongue, let one interpret, but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church.” Paul did not give an exception and say that if

there was not a qualified man present that a woman could translate, but said in verse 1 Corinthians 14:34, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." A woman translating a sermon in a mixed assembly of the church is outside the realm of expediency because it is forbidden.

The broad principle of 1 Timothy 2 was applied to a specific situation in 1 Corinthians 14 when the church had assembled. Although the men had to take turns and remain silent at times when there was no interpreter, for things to be done decently and in order, the women were commanded to be silent for an additional reason: "as also saith the law," the original law of roles given at creation.

The New Testament church faced cultural problems which are not relevant to us today. We also encounter some questions which they didn't face. God in His wisdom gave us Divine principles found in 1 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34 that teach us man is the spiritual head of the woman; she is not to teach or usurp authority over the man and when the church gathers for worship she is commanded to be silent and not participate in the public speaking.

With these principles we can know the answers to the questions that may arise concerning women's role in the church. Although we as Christian women are required not to teach, nor usurp authority over the man we have a vital God given role in the church. Men and women have different strengths and weaknesses. Together they make a mighty team in the kingdom.¹

The Bible Requires Women To Be In Subjection

We humble ourselves in obedience to God's Word because we are in subjection to Him. The Bible requires us to be in subjection to our husbands.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

It is not easy to be in subjection for many, because we have to put our own wants aside and do another's will and it takes discipline over ourselves to do this. Fortunately we have our Savior as a great example for us in being in subjection to another's will.

In 1 Peter 2:13-19, Peter is exhorting the Christians to be in subjection to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether kings or governors. Servants were to be subject to their masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward. 1 Peter 2:19-21 says:

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience sake toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

Christians have been called to a life of enduring trial and persecution even when it is unjust. Jesus "...learned obedience by the things He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Our Lord willingly suffered an unfair trial, He was wrongfully accused and horribly mistreated and finally suffered death on the cross so that He could redeem us, the guilty ones. Thus, He is our perfect example of virtuous suffering that Peter has just spoken of.² When we truly appreciate all the suffering our Lord went through for us, that He took on the punishment that we deserve all because of His great love for us, not wanting us to be lost eternally, then we like the early Christians will be able to endure unjust treatment.

It is in this context that Peter exhorts wives to be in subjection to their own husbands. During this time in non-Greek countries, particularly before the influence of the Gospel was felt, the women held the same rank as slaves. Though among the Greeks her position was not quite so degraded, she had only an intermediate position between free persons and slaves. So it was, "In like manner," i.e., as with the principles taught concerning the duty of Christian slaves to be subject to their own masters, wives are to be constantly submitting themselves to their own husbands. Christian women who were married to non-Christian men may have been tempted to despise their husbands because they were not treated well and may have felt obligated only to the Christian men in the church. The effect of such an attitude would cause problems not only in the church, but in the family and in society in general. They were not to forget the obligations that are fundamental and vital to the permanence of society.³ We can see today the havoc in our families, the church, and society that has come about by the disregard for God's role for women.

In Ephesians 5:22-33, we again have the teaching on wives being subject to their husbands. This time it is compared to the great and perfect love that Christ, as the bridegroom, has for His bride, the church. The wife is to be submissive to her husband in everything, as the church is to Christ. We know that Christ has not asked anything of the church that is not in harmony with God's will. In the same way husbands should not ask of their wives anything that would be breaking God's law; if he does then she is not bound to obey. Our submission must be in accordance with the principles of righteousness and we are not required to do anything that would stain our Christian character. The submission of the church to Christ

is that of love, respect and reverence. This is the same befitting relation we should hold toward our husband.

A wife has a very special incentive for being in subjection to her husband. The Bible teaches that she is his personal evangelist.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

The wife is to keep on allowing herself to be placed under the authority of her husband. Why? She is willingly submissive for the purpose of winning the soul of her husband. In this verse there are two ways that she does this. In being submissive to her husband a wife is chaste. This means holy, separated for God. As wives we are to live above the carnal ways of the world. Also in being submissive to her husband, a wife lives in “fear,” the kind of “fear” Sarah had for Abraham, a fear of respect. Remember, this verse is to Christian wives who are married to non-Christian men. Non-Christian husbands may not always act as they should but Christian wives are not to degrade their husbands to others. Wives are to respect the role that God has given him in the home.

Man and woman are spiritually equal (1 Pet. 3:7) but man is Scripturally recognized as head and leader in the family. In 1 Peter 3 (and also in Ephesians 5), just as God has taught wives their role in marriage, so also He teaches husbands their role. Husbands are to dwell with their wives, “according to knowledge” (1 Pet. 3:7). Husbands are to understand the nature of the marital relationship, showing proper regard for their wives. Who could know more about how to treat a woman than the Creator of woman Himself, God. He has made us the weaker vessel physically (1 Pet. 3:7) but He has given us

a protector, our husbands. Just as Christ is the Savior of the church (Eph. 5:23), so the husband is the preserver and supporter of his wife. Husbands are to cherish and love their wives just as Christ loves the church. We do not doubt the great love Christ has for the church because He has shown His sacrificial love toward the church. And wives will never doubt their husbands love when they are loved with this same kind of love. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it...” The love here required of the husband is not of passion, but of the soul in its spiritual purity and from its innermost depths. It should be patterned after God’s love, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing, and self-devoting, even unto death.

“Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:28). Brother Lipscomb, in the Gospel Advocate commentaries, makes this comment:

So the wife becomes part of the body of the husband. The twain are one. This is because she is one with him, and their interests are identified; because by this, he really promotes his own welfare as much as he does when he takes care of his own body. A husband’s kindness to his wife will be more than repaid by the happiness which she imparts, and all the real solicitude which he shows to make her happy will come to far more than it costs. If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effective way, he should follow the Lord’s instruction to show love and kindness to his wife.⁴

When husbands and wives trust God and love each other as God reveals in His Word the wife will be happy to submit to her husband and the husband will be rewarded with a wife that enjoys pleasing him. As Christian women, let us remember that we and our husbands are

a work in progress. Let us be patient with our husbands and concentrate on being the wives God would have us to be. If we are having problems in our marriage we need to get help. Remember that the church is a family. We need to reach out to one another and not suffer in silence. Sometimes we just may need to talk out our problems to a sister and receive guidance and encouragement. Or we may need the help of the elders or preacher for counseling. Get help early before problems get even more complicated and the stress begins to affect you physically. If our husbands never become godly husbands, let us remember the example of our Savior and find strength in the suffering and sacrifice of Christ for us and gladly bear our burdens for Him. We know that He cares and our reward awaits us in heaven.

The Bible Requires Women To Be Teachers

The Bible requires women to be teachers. Philip's four daughters possessed the gift of prophecy which enabled them to teach others as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 21). This could not have been done without the Lord's consent, so we conclude that God intended for women to be teachers. We are free to teach women and children, and, to a certain extent and under certain circumstances, even men, as Priscilla taught Apollos with her husband (Acts 18:26).

When Christ gave the great commission and said, "Go ye", it included women, both married and single. We can do much when it comes to soul winning. We can go house to house passing out tracts. We can teach Bible classes both at the church building and in our homes. What better way to teach than to open our homes to our friends and neighbors and teach them the Gospel. We can teach children or adults. Our junior high school girls need to

be taught by a woman. Many girls are already dating by this age. They need to learn the Biblical concepts for dating and marriage from a faithful Christian woman, because many of our girls are not learning it at home. The world tells them everything is OK; there is no standard. They need to be taught that God gives us a standard that will bring us blessings and happiness, not sexual diseases, unwanted pregnancies and broken homes.

Think how the church would grow if we would teach some each week. We don't have to go door knocking every day, or hold Bible studies in our home everyday, but just set aside some time for evangelism. We have so much Bible material that gives us all the Scripture references on each Bible topic, that we need not fear teaching. There are Bible film strips that all you have to do is put the tape into the VCR and sit back and listen. We can even teach our family and friends who are far away by Bible Correspondence Courses. The material abounds—we just have to get motivated to use it. Check your church library for these helps.

The Bible requires older women to teach younger women:

The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Tit. 2:3-5).

The older women should be matured in the faith, living holy lives, so that by word and example they can teach the younger women. Our home is the base for nurturing our children; it's the launching pad for our

husband's activities outside the home and a powerful tool for shaping society. God has given this work to women, we are workers at home. I'm sure that most young wives and mothers want all the help they can get. God says this help needs to come from older faithful Christian women that have already been through the challenges of being a godly wife and mother by applying God's Word to their life. Only God's ways will result in happy marriages and godly children that will bring glory to God.

A Christian mother wants to go to heaven and take her children with her. This does not happen by accident. This must be the goal of her life. She will mold her children's lives in the Word of God, just as Eunice brought up Timothy in the Scriptures. Her dreams for her children will not be a cheerleader, football star, material prosperity or positions of power. She will be doing her best to train up her children to be able Gospel preachers, a dedicated elder or deacon, a ladies class teacher, song leader, or devoted helpmeet. She will help them recognize their talents and develop them for use in the kingdom.⁵

The Bible Requires Women To Be Hospitable

Not only do we need to be concerned about our own family's physical and spiritual welfare but others also. The Bible requires us to open up our homes with hospitality. This is a very enjoyable requirement of God. There is no telling how much good comes from having people into our homes. My husband and I owe a lot to Bill and Mary Lou Height. As soon as Joe became a Christian they had us in their home that very Sunday night and many, many times after that for fellowship and study of God's Word. Thanks to their showing us the Jule Miller film strips I realized I was not a Christian. I realized I hadn't the

proper knowledge the first time I was buried in water as a teenager and so was baptized truly for the first time, knowing I was baptized into Christ, into His body, the one church, for the forgiveness of my sins.

When we open our homes to others not only are they benefitted but we are very blessed also. It's a great lesson for our children to see us helping others know the Gospel, giving those that need a place to stay, a room in our home. I know our family has been uplifted and encouraged by the Gospel preachers that have stayed in our home. Some of my fondest memories is the great laughter that goes on around the supper table when we have guests into our home. And preachers seem to be the funniest!

Sometimes there are children in our congregation or neighborhood that could use a welcoming family to befriend them and help them along life's pathway. They may not have anyone but us to show them love and teach them the love of God. We don't need lots of time, we don't have to have beautiful homes, or spend lots of money on food preparation. Many a time I have sat in very lowly homes and have been served tea and watermelon seeds or peanuts, but the people were warm and kind and the mutual upliftment just as enjoyable as the times I have been in a beautiful home and eaten a delicious dinner of many courses.

The Lord Himself gave us a great lesson concerning hospitality in our home. We all know of Mary and Martha, two godly sisters, but Mary was more concerned with spiritual things and Martha with the physical things. Jesus was visiting their house and Martha was busy in the kitchen. It's obvious from the Scriptures she wanted to cook the Lord a delicious meal. I have to admit that would be my foremost thought, after the house was

spotless anyway. Mary chooses to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him. Martha was a diligent housekeeper. Homemaking is truly honorable and should be regarded as the high calling of womanhood (Prov. 31:10-31; Tit. 2:5). Martha wanted to prepare a delicious meal for Jesus but she was so busy about what she could do for Jesus that she forgot what He could do for her. It also caused her to feel resentment toward her sister, Mary, complaining to Jesus, “dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone” (Luke 10:40).

When we are so absorbed in physical things it’s hard to see the value of spiritual things. Martha expected Jesus to justify her and send Mary to help her. However, the Lord gently reprovved Martha for her attitude. “...Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42).

There was nothing wrong with preparing a meal, but sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning His will was much more needful. Let us remember this great lesson that we be not so cumbered with the physical part of life that we neglect the spiritual. The whole purpose of opening our homes is to help and encourage others spiritually and to be blessed ourselves. Therefore let us not be so concerned with thinking it takes so much time and expense to open our homes to others, but be concerned with showing loving hospitality with what we have, both time and money.

The Bible Requires Women To Abound In Good Works

The Bible requires women to be full of good works. Dorcas was a great example for us (Acts 9:36-42). Dorcas was not concerned with how little others were doing

while she was so busy helping others, but her attitude was “What can I do for the widows and the needy?” Dorcas had a skill and talent that she could use to help others. She made coats and garments. Often times we have the opportunity to help but life just seems so busy that we let it slip by and say, “Next time I’ll help.” But too many times “next time” comes and we say the same thing, and we never “make time” to help the needy. Dorcas could sew. Many ladies today can sew, cook a meal, babysit or clean house for those who are unable to do it themselves. Remember, the Lord said not even a cup of cold water that is given in His name will go unrewarded (Mark 9:41).

We see from 1 Timothy 5:9-10 that the Bible requires women to abound in good works:

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works: if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work...

Some of us feel we have very little talent to use in the kingdom. While I don’t believe this to be true, sometimes we can help just by being present. Mary Magdalene was this kind of woman; she was always there. Luke 8:1-3 records that not only the 12 apostles were with Jesus as He traveled “throughout every city and village preaching...” but several women too. One of these was Mary Magdalene, she ministered unto him of her substance. Mary’s heart was with her Lord and that is where her treasures were found. In Mark’s description of this aspect of her devotion he says she followed him and ministered unto him (Mark 15:41). Not only did she give her money but she served Him herself. Mary was very grateful to her Lord for casting out the evil demons

in her just as we should be for Jesus cleansing us from all our evil sins.

Mary was also there at the most fearful and difficult time for Jesus—a time when many fled from the Lord’s side. Mary was at His crucifixion. What could Mary do? She couldn’t take His pain and agony away, she couldn’t keep people from mocking Him or take Him down from the cross, but she could be there, she could show her love and concern for her Lord. Have you ever just needed someone to be with you? They didn’t need to say anything or do anything, just be there.

Mary was there when Christ’s body was taken down from the cross. Luke says that she followed Joseph as he took the body from the cross to the burial place (Luke 23:55). When Joseph rolled the stone into its place, Mary Magdalene was sitting over against the sepulcher (Matt. 27:61). When the women prepared spices for Jesus’ body, she was there (Luke 23:56). Mary was first to the tomb on Sunday morning, “...when it was yet dark...” (John 20:1). She saw the stone rolled away and ran to tell Peter and John someone had taken their Lord. She returned with them and stayed outside the tomb weeping after they had left. She was there, and because she was there she was blessed to be the first to see Jesus after His resurrection.

We too can “be there.” It doesn’t matter how large or small the work may be, we can “be there” to help in any way we can, and we will receive many blessings from our Lord and some very unexpected ones too.

The Bible Requires Women To Be Chaste

The last topic I will discuss in this lesson is that the Bible requires women to have a chaste behavior. Chaste means pure, modest, innocent and blameless. If a Christian

woman is going to help convert her non-Christian husband to the Lord, her pure and holy behavior is very important. It is not only important to her but to every Christian woman. We are to be the light of the world to bring people to Christ. We must be very careful about the words that come forth from our heart and the deeds that we do. Non-Christians are all about us and they are watching. Will we bring them closer to Christ or farther away from Him?

Matthew 12:34 says "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." What is abundant or stored up in our hearts? What we say is a direct condition of our heart. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. 12:35). In our day and time it seems women can be just as crude and evil in speech as worldly men. In joking around and "having fun," they speak of ugly things. I guess we should not be surprised by this because when one doesn't let God govern his or her life they can fall to the lowest depths. What is surprising to me is that I know of a group of young Christian women who got together to study the Bible and somehow they got off on talking about very ugly things and speaking of things that many of us I'm sure don't even know the meaning of. When the young Bible teacher did her best to get them to get back to their study they called her a "goody-goody." This ugly talk should never be named among Christian men, let alone Christian women. This kind of joking is what we should have left behind when we put on Christ.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Only when our heart is right will our speech and actions be right. How do we keep or guard our heart? As Matthew 12:35 says, "...out of the good treasure of the heart comes good things." Good comes from the knowledge of God's Word. If we want to be pure,

holy, chaste women, then we need to study God's Word, and not just a little study. We want to have an abundance of good through the knowledge of God's Word stored in our hearts so good will come forth in our actions and speech. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness and it's through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue. When we fill our minds and hearts with things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and things of good report as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8, there will not be room for evil. We will learn to hate evil as God hates evil and desire to live a wholesome pure life.

Conclusion

Because we are imperfect beings we will at times sin and fall, but we want to quickly repent even if we feel we may soon do the same sin again because of weakness. We never want to let sin take root in our hearts to where we keep doing it and grow calloused and stop repenting and caring about being a godly, chaste woman. Let us all strive to be a strong godly woman with a meek and quiet spirit which in God's sight is of great price.

Endnotes

1 Kerry Duke, **My Sisters Keeper**, (Huntsville, Alabama: Publishing Designs, Inc., 1999) pp. 148-49.

2 Bruce Oberst, **Bible Study Textbook Series**, Letters From Peter, (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1962) p. 67.

3 Guy N. Woods, **Gospel Advocate New Testament Commentaries**, I Peter, (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1960) p. 86.

4 David Lipscomb, **Gospel Advocate New Testament Commentaries**, Ephesians, (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1961) p. 115.

5 Thomas B. Warren, **The Spiritual Sword**, (Memphis, TN, Getwell Church of Christ, 1992) pp.38-39.

CHAPTER 35

Some Great Women Of The Bible

Sheila Winstead

Introduction

IT IS A VERY humbling experience, and at the same time a great honor and blessing to have been asked to prepare a lesson for the **2005 POWER Lectureship**. This congregation has been a wonderful place for our children and grandchildren to be brought up in the Lord. My husband, Paul, and I have been involved with the lectureship from it's beginning, and we are grateful to all of the elders and preachers who have been involved in establishing it and keeping it vital. I would like to express a special thanks to B.J. and to our current elders for honoring me with an opportunity to present this lesson.

There are many women in both the Old and New Testaments who could be considered "great," some for a particular event or trait, and others for either their great wickedness or their great faith in the Lord. We can learn many lessons from studying all of them, but in paying special attention to those who are remembered for their faith and goodness gives us all the courage and strength to increase our service to God. It is especially encouraging to recognize that many of these women were commended for their faith and service even though their imperfections were also made known to us. We should certainly recognize the women who were remembered in "Faith's Hall of Fame"

in Hebrews 11. It is interesting that Sarah, who is also studied for her shortcomings, and Rahab, a known harlot, are the two women mentioned in this great chapter.

Sarah

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable (Heb. 11:11-12).

This passage in Hebrews reminds us that even though Sarah sometimes let her doubts get the best of her, she is mentioned by the writer of Hebrews as a person of great faith. Sarah, or Sarai, as she was first called, was the wife of Abraham, a man whom God chose to be the father of a great nation, a nation which would bring us the Christ. How hard it must have been for Sarah to leave her home, her friends, and her family in Ur of Chaldea and go with Abraham to an unknown place. Ur was a wealthy city in southern Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq. On the Euphrates River near the Persian Gulf, Ur had a very sophisticated civilization, and industry and trade were well-developed. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of extensive writings in a sophisticated language, as well as advanced mathematics, astronomy, medicine, magic, business records, very advanced building techniques. The area was wealthy, advanced, well-known, and steeped in idolatry.¹

Abraham's father, Terah, took Abraham, Sarah, and Lot from Ur to Haran in the upper part of Mesopotamia to live. Some time after that, God commanded Abraham to "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee"

(Gen. 12:1). As Abraham's wife, this command applied to Sarah as well. She did not try to discourage her husband's obedience, as Job's wife did (Job 2:9), nor did she try to persuade her husband to disobey God as Adam's wife did (Gen. 3:6). 1 Peter 3:6 commends Sarah for her subjection to her husband, "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord..." Although wealthy, Abraham and Sarah became nomads living in tents as God led them in their travels. We are given a command similar to the command given to Abraham and Sarah. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord..." (2 Cor. 6:17). God expects us to live our lives in a way that can be distinguished from the world.

When Sarah became advanced in years and past the normal age of child-bearing, she became impatient waiting for God to fulfill His promise of a son to Abraham and thus gave her handmaid Hagar to Abraham to bear a child for him. When Hagar conceived, we can understand Sarah's jealousy when Hagar despised her for not having borne a child. When Sarah overheard the three angels repeat God's promise to Abraham, saying that Sarah would have a son, "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, **After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?**" (Gen. 18:12). Sarah laughed out of unbelief, and then denied laughing. The Lord, through His angels said "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). This must have taught Sarah a valuable lesson, because she evidently strengthened her faith. God kept His promise according to His own timetable, and Sarah gave birth to Isaac at the age of ninety. This time when Sarah laughed, it was the laughter of joy. "And Sarah said:

God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? For I have born him a son in his old age. (Gen. 21:6-7).

Even though Sarah was a godly woman, we are shown her weaknesses as well as her strengths. Lottie Beth Hobbs, in her book, **The Daughters of Eve**, states that “at times the most faithful men and women fall below their usual high standard.”² How often do we get discouraged waiting for God to answer our prayers in the way that we think is best, and according to **our** timetable? “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” (Heb. 10:23). Because of her great faith, Sarah was given the privilege of giving birth to Isaac, through whom the nation of Israel was established, and through that the lineage of Christ. God can use each of us in His kingdom for some purpose, even though we are imperfect women just as Sarah was imperfect.

In addition to her faith, Sarah should also be commended for her hospitality. Three men appeared at Sarah and Abraham’s tent, and Abraham bid them to stay and rest and eat (Gen. 18:1-8). A last-minute meal had to be prepared and served. Hebrews 13:2 admonishes us to “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” This is certainly a reference to Abraham and Sarah, as the men were God’s messengers. Indeed, one of the men was referred to as being “the Lord” in Genesis 18:1, and later in verses Genesis 18:17-33. Although we may not be entertaining angels, we are commanded to “use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Pet. 4:9), and to be “given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

Rahab

It seems unlikely that we would consider a harlot to be a great woman of the Bible. However, she is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31 as someone of great faith: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not,

when she had received the spies with peace.” We are introduced to Rahab when Joshua sent spies to Jericho before preparing the people of Israel to cross over the Jordan. She hid the spies and told the king’s men they had left. After the king’s men went away, she went to the spies and said:

I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in Heaven above, and earth beneath (Josh. 2:9-11).

Rahab let the men down from her roof by a scarlet cord, and was told that when the Israelites came into the land to possess it, she was to bind that same scarlet rope in her window, and everyone in her house would be safe. She did as she was told, and was saved with her household and all of her possessions and allowed to live in Israel. It is likely that Rahab, in addition to being a harlot in Jericho, also had a more honorable profession. She had stacks of flax, which is used for making linen, upon her roof. It is possible that she made the scarlet thread or cord by which she let down the spies. The Hebrew word *chebel* which is translated as **cord** or **thread** in the account of Rahab may also be translated as **rope**.³ Rahab married Salmon and was mentioned in the genealogy of Christ as the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth, the great-grandmother of David (Matt. 1:4-6). What wonderful things might God accomplish through His grace and

providence by using any one of us, no matter what our shortcomings, if we have a faith like Rahab and are willing to put it into practice? Indeed, Rahab proved that “actions speak louder than words” because she put her life on the line to help the people of God.

Ruth

Ruth is often referred to as the perfect “daughter-in-law” because she loved her mother-in-law Naomi enough to leave her home to take care of her. Many things make her worth our study, especially the fact that, as previously mentioned, she was included in the genealogy of Christ. Although Ruth, a Moabitess, was a Gentile, it is interesting to note that Moab was the son of Abraham’s nephew Lot (Gen. 19:37), and thus Ruth was a descendant of the same bloodline as Abraham.

Naomi and her husband Elimelech, as well as their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, left their home in Bethlehem-judah and went to the country of Moab because of a famine in the land during the time the judges were ruling Israel (Ruth 1:1-2). While dwelling in the country of Moab, Elimelech died. The two sons married women of Moab, one of whom was Ruth. After dwelling there for about ten years, the two sons died, and Naomi desired to return home to her own people. Naomi entreated her two daughters-in-law to stay with their own people. Although Orpah did as Naomi asked, Ruth “clave” unto Naomi (Ruth 1:14). Thus begins one of the most well-known love stories of the Bible, one that is often mentioned when talking about devotion, commitment, loyalty, and tender-heartedness. What Ruth said to Naomi is often quoted at weddings, even though the statement was made by Ruth to her mother-in-law, whom she loved deeply.

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from
following after thee: for whither thou goest, I

will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth, with her love and tender heart, determined to provide comfort and companionship to Naomi, who had suffered such great sorrow with the deaths of her husband and her two sons. Ruth helped to care for Naomi by gleaning corn in the fields. Her increased faith in the God of Israel was made known to us when Boaz said to her:

It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust (Ruth 2:11-12).

With the wise assistance of Naomi, who was kin to Boaz, Ruth married Boaz and gave birth to Obed, the grandfather of David, and through his lineage, the Christ. How much joy Ruth would have felt if she had known that her loving devotion to her mother-in-law would have such a far-reaching reward!

The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians makes it clear that if we have true Christian love, we have the foundation required for living our lives as God would have us live. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]” (1 Cor. 13:13). This type of love, “*agape*” love, is something that we need to strive for diligently.

And beside this, giving all **diligence**, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance

patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity [love] (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Deborah

Although the story of Ruth took place during the time that the Judges ruled in Israel, that charming love story is in stark contrast to the overall theme of the book of **Judges**. Repeatedly falling into idolatry, the Israelites would be punished by being delivered by God into the hands of other nations. When the Israelites repented and cried out for God's help, He would raise up a Judge to deliver them and rule over them. One of these Judges was a woman named Deborah. The Bible tells us in Judges 4 that Deborah was a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth. She dwelt in Mount Ephraim between Ramah and Bethel under a palm tree, where she settled disputes for the children of Israel. At that time the people were being oppressed by Sisera, a captain in the army of Jabin, king of Canaan. Sisera was greatly feared because he had nine hundred chariots of iron. After twenty years of oppression by Sisera, the children of Israel cried unto the Lord for deliverance. Deborah called Barak and told him that God wanted him to take ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and go toward Mount Tabor. God said that He would draw Sisera's army unto the river Kishon with his chariots and deliver him into Israel's hand. Barak said that he would go only on one condition—that Deborah would go with him. Deborah agreed to go, but prophesied that Sisera would be defeated by the hand of a woman, not to Barak's honor. How greatly respected Deborah must have been to have inspired such confidence from a leader of armies.

As promised, the Lord defeated the army of Sisera with its nine hundred chariots of iron, and Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite,

entreating her to hide him and protect him. When he was asleep, Jael drove a nail through his temples and into the ground, thus fulfilling Deborah's prophecy that Sisera would be delivered into the hand of a woman. Israel's army continued to have success, finally destroying Jabin, the king of Canaan. Deborah is also remembered for her great song of praise after Israel's triumph over Sisera and the king of Canaan. She called Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite "blessed above women" (Judg. 5:24) for her cunning way of making Sisera feel comfortable and secure and then killing him in his sleep. At a time in history that was notable for men of war and great armies, God used Deborah as a prophetess and judge for His people. Judges 5:31 tells us that "the land had rest forty years."

As Christians today we need strength to fight the war that Satan is waging against us. We can have the strength and wisdom that we need to fight this battle by looking to God's Word.

Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

Hannah

Other than the prayers of Jesus which have been recorded for us, the prayer of Hannah stands out in God's Word as such a great example of the effectiveness of prayer and the faithfulness of a loving mother. The first chapter of 1 Samuel tells us that Hannah was one of the two wives of Elkanah, but she was childless, while Penninah, the other wife, had children. Because Elkanah loved Hannah and had compassion on her because she had no children, Peninnah enjoyed taunting her and provoking her. Hannah was so distressed that she wept and did not eat. She went to the temple where Eli the priest sat and prayed in "bitterness of soul" and "wept sore" (1 Sam. 1:10).

As she prayed, she vowed to the Lord that if He would remember her and give her a son, she would give the child to the Lord. As she continued praying earnestly, speaking only in her heart but not out loud, Eli determined that she must be drunk and reproved her. Hannah told Eli that she had not been drinking, but pouring her heart out to the Lord. Eli then told her to "go in peace" and that God would grant her petition (1 Sam. 1:17). Hannah had such great faith that her request would be granted, she once again began eating, and verse 18 tells us that "her countenance was no more sad." Of course we all know that God did give Hannah a son, and she named him "Samuel, saying, **Because I have asked him of the Lord**" (1 Sam. 1:20). When the child was weaned, the mother kept her promise to God by delivering Samuel to the temple to be "lent to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:28). The prayer or song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:2 inspires us: "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

Hannah understood that her son was a gift from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights..." (Jas. 1:17).

Mothers today should recognize that there is no greater thing to strive for with our children than to have them serve God. There is nothing more important than God's Word that we can teach them, for God's Word "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of His saints (Prov. 2:6-8).

Hannah is also a reminder of the power of prayer:

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

Vashti

When thinking of the book of Esther, usually we focus right away on young Esther. But another woman worthy of our attention is Vashti, who gave up her status as queen by refusing to give up her convictions. During the reign of the Medo-Persians, who conquered the Babylonians, the Jews were dispersed throughout much of the world. Vashti was married to Ahasuerus, the king of the Persian empire, which according to Esther 1:1 covered the area from India to Ethiopia, including over 127 provinces. Following 180 days of showing off his kingdom and his own greatness, the king threw a great feast, inviting all of his princes and his servants. As was the custom, the queen made a separate feast for the women in the royal house. After drinking at the feast for seven days, the king commanded that the queen be brought before the king, wearing the

royal crown, to be admired by his male guests, “for she was fair to look on” (Esth. 1:11). Vashti, to her honor, refused to go to the king’s feast to be paraded around in a banquet hall full of drunken men. Fearing that other women would take Vashti’s example as an excuse for not obeying their own husbands, the king’s advisors suggested that Vashti’s position be taken away from her and that she no longer be allowed to go before the king. While drunkenness caused the king to make another unwise decision, Vashti was more concerned with modesty, custom, and propriety.

God’s Word makes it clear that modesty and inner beauty are traits that we should strive for:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-5).

In 1 Timothy 2:9-10 the Bible says, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but with good works.”

Esther

After Vashti’s banishment from the throne, the search began for a new queen for Ahasuerus (also called Xerxes I). Among the candidates was a Jewish maiden named Esther

who, along with her older cousin Mordecai, had been taken to Persia after the fall of Babylon. As was the custom, twelve months of purification was undergone by Esther and the other young maidens in preparation to go before the king. Each day Mordecai walked near the women's court to ask about Esther and make sure she fared well (Esth. 2:6-13). Advised not to make known her Jewish nationality, Esther was crowned queen. One day while walking near the king's gate, Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the king, and made the plot known to Esther so that she could tell the king. The conspirators were caught and hanged, and the event was written in the king's chronicles (Esth. 2: 21-23).

Some time after those events, the king promoted Haman above all of his princes and commanded that reverence be shown to Haman. Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman angered Haman greatly, and Haman soon convinced the king that all Jews should be destroyed. Through God's providence Esther, a Jew, had been placed in a position of prominence, although her nationality was still not known by the king. Although fearing for her life, Esther heeded Mordecai's encouraging words, "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14) and was able to thwart Haman's plans.

The book of Esther is full of intrigue, romance, assassination plots, genocide, war and treachery, but most of all faith that God would once again deliver His people. Esther was able to overcome her fear, and with cunning, courage, tact, and faith, allowed God to use her to save the Jewish nation from destruction. It was during the reign of Ahasuerus' son Artaxerxes that Ezra went to Jerusalem to reinstate the keeping of the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:1-6). Thirteen years later, also during the reign of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to oversee the rebuilding of

the walls of the city (Neh. Ch. 2-6). It was during this time period that the Persian Empire declined, the Jewish worship system was strengthened in preparation for the coming Messiah, Greece experienced its “golden age,” and Rome was beginning her rise to greatness.⁴

Esther reminds us that we each have a job to do for the Lord. Many times we have to overcome fear of ridicule, rejection, and other types of persecution in order to accomplish what we should for His kingdom. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Looking to God for our strength, we will not fail. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

Priscilla

In the New Testament, Priscilla stands out as a Christian woman who knew how to put her faith into action. With her husband Aquilla, she was forced to leave Rome because of persecution by Claudius (Acts 18:2). While living in Corinth, they opened up their home to the apostle Paul, a fellow tent maker. They later traveled with Paul to Ephesus. While in that city, Priscilla assisted her husband in teaching Apollos, “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures” (Acts 18:24). With her husband she was referred to as one of Paul’s “helpers in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 16:3). Priscilla was an example of hospitality, allowing the local church to meet in her house (Rom. 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19). Priscilla worked side by side with her husband in his trade and in his spiritual work. She and her husband risked their lives for the apostle Paul (Rom. 16:4) and are remembered by him in his first letter to the Corinthians (Rom. 16:19) and in his second letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:19). Although her name is always mentioned with her husband’s name, the fact that her name is often listed first indicates that she

was held in high regard. Priscilla brought honor to her husband's name by her faithfulness, hospitality, willingness to teach, assistance in his profession as a tent maker, being a helper to the apostle Paul, and by her courage in a time of great persecution.

One of the important lessons we can learn from Priscilla is the value of personal evangelism and teaching. Acts 18:24-28 gives us the story of Apollos, a Jew who was "mighty in the Scriptures," an "eloquent" preacher who spoke "boldly" about Jesus, but understood "only the baptism of John." Acts 18:26 tells us that Priscilla and Aquila "took him unto them" to teach him the Gospel more accurately. Priscilla did not violate Paul's admonition for women not to teach men publicly (1 Tim. 2:12), but with her husband taught Apollos privately. Teaching Apollos had far-reaching results, for we are told that after traveling to Achaia, Apollos "mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:27-28). The "Great Commission" does not apply only to men, but to all Christians. The commandment has a perpetual nature, meaning that those whom the apostles taught were to also teach, and so on throughout the ages.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying,
All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Mary, Mother of Jesus

While Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been erroneously elevated in some religions to a position of Deity worthy of worship, she was nevertheless a woman with many

attributes godly women should strive for. First of all, as a young virgin espoused to Joseph, Mary had found favor in God's sight (Luke 1:30). God could see her faith, her modesty, and her courage.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, **Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, **Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end** (Luke 1:26-33).

At a time when a young maiden would have been publicly shamed and ridiculed for being with child before marriage, Mary accepted God's message with faith and grace, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Instead of living in shame and fear, she had great praise for the Lord:

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation He hath shewed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and

exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever (Luke 1:46-55).

Can you imagine Mary's discomfort when having to travel a long distance on a donkey when her time was so near, and then having to give birth in a stable? Can you imagine the mother's fear when Herod sought to kill her young child? Can you imagine her homesickness when she was forced to live in Egypt until Herod was dead, and then in Nazareth to avoid Herod's son? Although these moves were fulfillments of prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" and "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:15; Matt. 2:23), Mary's only concern was for the safety of her young son. Can you picture Mary's confusion, her pride, and her heartache as she watched her son grow, knowing that someday He would leave her to complete His Divine mission? When Mary and Joseph had to search for Jesus in the temple when He was twelve years of age, Jesus said to them, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Imagine Mary's anguish as she witnessed her son's crucifixion: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother" (John 19:25). Can you imagine Mary's awe when she found out that her son's tomb had been found empty? "...He is not here; for He is risen..." (Matt. 28:6).

Mary's instructions to the servants at the wedding feast should also be heeded by us today, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

Lois and Eunice

Just as God's Word mentions Lois and Eunice together (2 Tim. 1:5), we should also study them together. Lois, Timothy's grandmother, and Eunice, Timothy's mother, are commended for their great faith, which they

passed on by teaching to Timothy. Their devotion to the Scriptures was manifest in young Timothy, a faithful preacher of the Word, and beloved of the apostle Paul. Although Eunice was a Jewess who became a Christian, she was married to a Greek. There is no mention in Scripture of Timothy's Greek father believing in the Gospel of Christ. That fact, plus Paul's commendation of Eunice's and Lois's faith, seems to indicate that Timothy's teaching all came from his mother and grandmother. Although it is certainly desirable to have two parents teaching a child God's Word, the example set here proves that when circumstances are not ideal, the faith and teaching of one parent can still produce a strong and faithful Christian child.

Spiritual training should begin at home. In Timothy's life, we can see how faith was taught and passed down through three generations through the apostle Paul's words: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). We also can see that the influence of grandparents can be great in a child's life. Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". Timothy's faith, therefore, came by hearing God's Word. Paul's epistle to Titus reminds us of some of the duties of **aged women**:

The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers, at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Tit. 2:3-5).

Christian mothers should have great joy in teaching their children the Word of God. Seeing a child's faith increase, and eventually seeing that child become a

Christian is a great reward. There is certainly no more important job as a parent than to help our child get to heaven. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). We should place the same importance on teaching our children God's Word as Moses commanded the children of Israel:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deut. 6:6-7).

Consider also the following poem:

Inheritance of ... Gladness

To bestow earth's proud possessions
On your children here below
Often makes them independent
And away from God they go.

But you safely give them knowledge,
Wisdom and sweet freedom too,
Of the sort your forbears handed
Through great sacrifice to you.

Do bestow an education
As it's taught in public schools;
But it's yours to teach of Jesus
And His blessed book of rules.

If you help them find salvation
And for Christ teach them to live
What a marvelous endowment!
Oh, what gladness you will give!

J.T. Bolding⁵

Other Women

Many other women of the Bible could be mentioned for greatness in a commendable fashion. In the Old Testament, we should certainly mention Eve, who as the

first woman, has often been called “the mother of all mankind.” Although remembered as much for being tricked by Satan, she was created by God as a suitable companion and helper for Adam (Gen. 2:18). We might mention the Queen of Sheba, for seeking after Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-13). The Shunammite woman of 2 Kings 4 should be commended for her great hospitality to the prophet Elisha, as well as for her perception in recognizing that Elisha was a great man of God. We could also mention Hagar, who, although a servant with few choices, with Abraham produced Ishmael, the head of the Arab nation (Gen. 17:20). Jochebed is notable for saving her son Moses, who became the great leader of the Israelites (Exod. 2). The mother who went to Solomon and was willing to give up her child to save his life is an example of true maternal affection (1 Kings 3:26).

In the New Testament, we rejoice with Elisabeth, who, though previously barren and advanced in years, gave birth to John the baptizer, and gave praise and encouragement to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1). We think also of the widow Anna, who was called a prophetess and was commended for her continuous devotion to God’s service (Luke 2:36-38). Mary Magdalene, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, are all noted for their devotion and service to Christ. Tabitha, or Dorcas, is often cited as an example of kind and loving service to those in need (Acts 9). The poor widow of Mark 12:42 demonstrates the humble and trusting attitude we should have when giving back to God that which is His. Other women could also be mentioned as being great for various reasons.

The Worthy Woman

The great woman which continues to stand the test of time is the woman described by Solomon as the “virtuous woman,” often called the “worthy woman.” A true

“superwoman” or “supermom”, she possesses the attributes that we all strive for. Industrious, honored and praised by both her husband and her children, strong, trustworthy, compassionate, generous, wise, kind, fearing the Lord, “she shall be praised” (Prov. 31).

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:10-31).

Conclusion

Women continue to have great influence in the world today, both for good and for evil. God's Word describes for us every type of woman alive today. Will each of us be an influence for good or for evil? Certainly as the "great" women of the Bible did, we will have our discouragements and our temptations, but God in His infinite wisdom, has given us instructions for overcoming those trials of life in order to gain the eternal reward of a home with Him in heaven.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to your virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:4-8).

Endnotes

1 Lottie Beth Hobbs, **Daughters of Eve**, (Fort Worth, TX: Harvest Publications, 1963), p.18.

2 Ibid, p. 21.

3 James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., **The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**, (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 224, **A Concise Dictionary of the Words in The Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version**, p. 36, included at the end of the volume.

4 **The New Analytical Bible and Dictionary of the Bible, Authorized King James Version, Comprehensive General Index Edition**, (Grand Rapids, MI: World Publishing, John A. Dickson Publishing Co.), pp.623-25, Contemporaneous History section following the Book of Esther.

5 Amy Bolding, **Please Give a Devotion for Women's Groups**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 104.

CHAPTER 36

Some Not So Great Women Of The Bible

Betty Beard

Introduction

THE THEME OF THE lectureship is “**Why Should I Believe The Bible?**” How can “Some Not So Great Women of the Bible” convince me to believe the Bible?

There is an old adage that says, “If we don’t learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.” Paul tells us in Romans 15:4, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” The Old Testament was written that we might learn how God dealt with His people in ages past and know that He will reward or punish us as He did them.

It is much more enjoyable and pleasant to read of the “great” women of the Bible and use them as our examples and well we should. But, sad to say, there are those not so great women also. This is one of the great things about the Bible. It tells about the good and the evil. God gave us both that we might learn to obey Him.

We learn from the negative things in our lives every day. Fire is hot; don’t touch. Traffic will run over us, so we don’t walk or play in the street. The police will arrest us if we break the law, so we abide by the laws. Poison will kill

us, so we don't take it into our bodies. We teach our children there are limits and if they overstep them and don't abide by the rules, they must suffer the consequences. We want to learn what these not so great women did that was wrong so that we might not commit the same wrongs. They disobeyed God and were punished for it. If we can learn from their disobedience, maybe we won't suffer the same punishment.

When we think of some not so great women of the Bible, two automatically come to mind: Jezebel and Athaliah. There is nothing good said about these women. They hated the people of God and did everything in their power to destroy them. Athaliah went so far as to kill her own grandsons.

Jezebel

Jezebel's evil life is recorded in 1 Kings 16:29-33; 1 Kings 18:13; 1 Kings 19:1-3; 1 Kings 19:21 and 2 Kings 9:30-37. She was the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, a nation that worshipped Baal and was married to Ahab, one of the most wicked kings of Israel. 1 Kings 16:33 says that Ahab "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" and Jezebel stirred him up to do even more wickedness (1 Kings 21:25).

Our first introduction to Jezebel in 1 Kings 18 deals with her killing the prophets of God. Obadiah, governor of Ahab's house, had to hide the prophets of God by fifties in a cave to protect them from Jezebel. From the very beginning, we see how evil she was. She hated the people of God and would let nothing stand in her way in trying to get rid of them. She had come from an idol worshipping people and had brought her idol worship with her. Chapter 19 records the event of Jezebel threatening the life of Elijah after the meeting of the prophets of Baal

and Elijah on Mt. Carmel. She was so angry with Elijah for defeating her prophets that she sent a message to him saying “let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them (the prophets of Baal) by tomorrow about this time” (1 Kings 19:2). Elijah had to flee for his life.

Chapter 21 of 1 Kings records the account of Jezebel acquiring the vineyard of Naboth for her husband, Ahab. Ahab had asked Naboth to give him his vineyard that he might use it as a garden because it was near his house. He did offer Naboth a better vineyard but Naboth told him he could not give it to him because it was an inheritance of his fathers. Of course Ahab should have know that the land could not be sold. It was to remain with the tribes according to Leviticus 25:23 and Numbers 36:7. Ahab goes home and pouts because he could not get what he wanted. Jezebel asks him what is wrong and he relates the events that had just transpired. Jezebel tells him to get up, eat some bread and be merry. She would get the vineyard for him.

She then forges her husband’s name to letters and sends them to the elders and nobles of the city. She tells them to proclaim a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. Two men offer false testimony against him saying that he had blasphemed God and the king. He is carried out of the city and stoned to death. Jezebel tells Ahab that Naboth is dead and he can now claim his vineyard.

God appears to Elijah and instructs him to go to Ahab and tell him that in the same place that the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, they would lick the blood of Ahab and that the dogs would eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. The account of her death is recorded in 2 Kings 9:30-37. She was thrown from the window and when they went to find her body to bury it, all that could be found was her

skull, the feet and the palms of her hands. What a terrible end for such a wicked woman.

Athaliah

Athaliah was about as wicked as Jezebel. In fact, she was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel so we might say, “she had a good teacher.” She, like her mother, manipulated her husband and son to do evil and bring idol worship into Israel (2 Chron. 21:5-6; 2 Chron. 22:1-4). According to 2 Chronicles 22:3, she was her son’s counselor to do wickedly. Jehu kills her son, Ahaziah, who was king of Judah, and Athaliah realizes that she will no longer be the queen mother, able to have her way. In order to retain her place of prominence, she kills the entire seed royal, including her own grandsons (2 Chron. 22:10)! How much more wicked can you get?

By God’s providence, the youngest son of Ahaziah, Joash, was taken by his aunt and hidden for six years in the temple. She knew he would be safe there. Athaliah certainly wouldn’t be coming to the temple. Athaliah was reigning over the land during this six years, erecting a temple to Baal in Jerusalem and allowing the temple of God to fall into disrepair. She did leave Jehoiada, the priest, in charge of the temple of God. Also, she allowed the services of the temple to continue. Remember that her father was supposed to be a follower of God but he certainly didn’t instruct his children in the ways of God.

In the seventh year of Athaliah’s reign, Jehoiada, priest in the temple, decides that it is time for Joash to assume the throne. He secures the services of the officers in the army and the Levites. He makes sure the temple and the surrounding grounds are secure and brings in the young boy, Joash. Joash is crowned king and the people celebrate with praising and saying “God save the king.” Athaliah hears the noise in the palace. She makes her

way to the temple and sees that her grandson has been crowned king and the people rejoicing. She cries “Treason, Treason.” At Jehoiada’s command, she is taken outside the temple and executed.

Some Other Not So Great Women

Jezebel and Athaliah are perhaps two of the most wicked women in the Bible but there are other not so great women of the Bible. Among these are:

Potiphar’s Wife (Gen. 39)

Potiphar’s wife surely had everything she could hope for or need. Her every need was met by servants and her husband was an officer in Pharaoh’s court. But she had wandering eyes. She saw innocent Joseph, going about his duties and desired him. She did everything she could to seduce him but he would not yield to her seductive ways. He would not sin against his master or more importantly, sin against God.

One day when Joseph went into the house to do his business, there were no men in the house and Potiphar’s wife caught him by his garments and tried to force herself upon him. As Joseph fled, he left his garment in his hand. Of course, she was very angry. So angry that she called the men of the house and lied about Joseph taking advantage of her. She said “I cried with a loud voice” and he fled. She kept the garment with her until her husband came home and told him the same story. Joseph was put into prison where he spent at least two years of his life, all because of the lies of a jealous woman.

Delilah (Judg. 16:4-20)

Delilah was a Philistine. Her name meant “delicate” or “dainty” but she certainly betrayed the meaning of her name. She used all her personal charm, mental ability

and nerve for one purpose—money. She is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament, Judas. She sold a man of God for money just as Judas sold our Lord for money. She deluded Samson into believing that she loved him but used all her charms to destroy him.

The Philistines hated Samson and offered her 1100 pieces of silver to discover the secret of Samson's strength. After Samson had teased her three times, she used the ultimate weapon of women—tears—to gain knowledge of the real source of his strength. She made him to sleep on her knees and called for a man to come and cut his hair and his strength was gone. The Bible does not tell us if she was among the Philistines killed when Samson caused the house to fall, but however she died, she did not die the death of the righteous. She had used her cunningness to destroy one of God's great leaders.

Strange Woman (Prov. 7)

Solomon urges his son to keep the commandments and laws that they might keep him from the strange woman that flattereth with her words. This "strange" woman evidently preys on the simple and innocent young men. She dressed in the attire of a harlot. She was loud and stubborn. She did not stay at home but wandered the streets and laid in wait at every corner. She used all her cunning ways to get the young man to go to her house. The young man followed her as an ox to the slaughter. Proverbs 7:27 says that her house is the way to hell.

Whether or not this is a real person that Solomon is talking about, or whether he is using this as an example, the lesson is the same. This woman was wicked. She not only engaged in sin herself, but encouraged others to participate also. Like-minded women will certainly suffer for their actions.

Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

We might not think of Sapphira as being a wicked woman but nothing good is said about her. She and her husband Ananias sold a piece of property. It was theirs to do with what they wanted. Others had been selling possessions and laying the money at the apostles' feet. Were they jealous of what others had done and wanted some recognition for themselves? She was just as much a part of this action as her husband. Ananias went before Peter and lied about the price they received from the land and fell down dead and was taken out and buried. About three hours later, Sapphira came before Peter and was asked if they had sold the land for so much and she replied, "Yea, for so much." Peter asked her, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" As he asked her this question, the young men that had just buried her husband came in, and she fell down dead also, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. Jealousy and greed can cost us our lives and souls.

Herodias and Her Daughter (Mark 6:14-28)

Hatred is a vicious emotion. John the Baptist had reprimanded Herod for having his brother Philip's wife and she hated him for it. Not only was she guilty of this terrible hate, but she used her daughter as an instrument in killing John, thereby adding more sin to her charge.

The daughter was not an innocent player in this tragedy. She was dancing before the king and his drunken friends, probably in a very provocative dance. As Herod became more drunken and smitten with the daughter's dancing, he promised her anything she wanted, up to half the kingdom. The daughter asked her mother what she should ask for and the reply was the head of John the Baptist.

Someone has compared Herodias with Jezebel in that she had so much influence over her husband. Each of their husbands were wicked men, but the wives were even more wicked. Each of them hated a prophet of God enough to kill them. Herod was exceeding sorry when he had to carry out the execution of John but he had to keep his promise. History tells us her husband was banished and ended his days in exile and shame. The pride of Herodias forced her to be faithful to her husband in the disgrace and misfortune she herself had caused.

Young Widows (1 Tim. 5:11-13)

We probably would not classify these young widows as being wicked but they were not being the children of God they should be. Paul gave the command to refuse to help these young women. They needed to get busy. He said they had learned to be idle, wandering from house to house, tattlers, and busybodies that spoke things they ought not. These young widows did not have enough to keep them occupied and the same is true with us today if we don't keep busy. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop."

Luke 11:24-26 records the account of the wicked spirit being cast out of a man but finding no place to rest, so he decides to return to his former house (man). He returns and finds it swept and garnished and takes seven more spirits, even more wicked than himself, with him. The last state of that man is worse than the first because he had not filled his life with good things.

These young widows were Christians but Paul was admonishing Timothy to refuse to take these widows into the care of the church because they needed to be busy doing things for themselves. The last state of these widows would be worse than the first if left with nothing to do. He said they should marry and care for their children and homes. We need to get busy also.

As we look at all the wickedness done by these women—the murders, lying, cheating, using fraudulent means to get what they wanted, causing their children to follow idolatrous worship, encouraging their husbands to do evil, committing immorality, hatred, deceit, do we just assume that they were evil from the beginning? Were they not born as innocent as any other baby? Of course they were. Their wickedness had to be learned. Perhaps they did not have godly parents to teach them the right way but they cannot use that as an excuse in the Day of Judgment. They will have to answer for their own actions just as we will answer for ours.

What can we learn from these wicked women that will make us believe the Bible? One, God's way is the only way and He will prevail. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23). "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). We cannot ignore God and think we can live any way we want to without suffering for our sins.

Two, there is only one God. They worshipped their idols and caused others to worship idols. God is a jealous God and we must worship Him and Him only. "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:" (Exod. 34:14). "...Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

Three, each one of us will give an account to God for our sins. "...the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). But no matter how wicked we are, God will forgive us if we will submit to His will. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting

life” (John 3:16). Any of these women could have been profitable to God had they simply obeyed His commands.

We must do the same. God’s Word has not changed. He still expects and demands obedience. “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). “And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9).

Will someone include us in a list of “not so great women” of the church or will we be remembered for our good deeds and obedience to God’s will?

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APPENDIX

A Grandfather's Appeal For Stronger DUI Laws

Timothy Wilkes, Sr.

Editor's Note: The following speech was given by brother Tim Wilkes, a grandfather of Ethan Bayless, to whom this year's lectureship book is dedicated. The speech is powerful and poignant. Our prayer is that this speech will motivate all of us to be filled with enough righteous indignation to change the laws in our respective communities (BJC).

2/15/05

TO THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE of Representatives Judiciary
Committee A:

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I thank you for the opportunity afforded me this day. Every American has the right to let his voice be heard at the ballot box, but few have the opportunity to orally address his lawmakers. I especially want to thank Chairman Blackmon and Representative Mayo.

My words spoken here today are neither the measured words of a politician, nor the persuasive words of a professional lobbyist. My words are spoken with due respect to the elected offices you hold; however, my words will be candid. My words are the words of a grieving grandfather and an outraged citizen. I appear before you today in behalf of my late grandson, Ethan Eric Bayless. Accompanying me is my wife, our daughter, son-in-law,

and granddaughter, Ginger, Jason, and Calista Bayless, Ethan's parents and four-year-old sister; also here are Jason's parents, and a host of Bayless and Wilkes family members, church members, friends, and concerned citizens. My only fear today is that I might let down my grandson by not adequately stating my case. I'm approaching you regarding our state's soft DUI laws.

I could talk all day about my grandchildren, as could any grandparent. But I feel compelled to tell you a few things about Ethan so you'll realize he is not just another number, another statistic, but he was a real person. Ethan was all boy; he loved to run, climb, jump, swing, and throw things. He enjoyed going for rides on my tractor and four-wheeler. He loved playing ball—any kind of ball. The word "ball" was probably his first word; at age one, he would talk in his sleep by just saying the word "ball." People were amazed at his throwing distance and accuracy. A toy was placed out of his reach, seven feet off of the floor; in one attempt, he knocked it down with a baseball. He was intelligent; at age one he studied a light switch, emptied his toy basket, turned it upside down, and used it as a stepstool to flip the switch. He loved Sunday school, singing, and cuddling; he loved to kiss his loved ones; he could call us all by name, tell us he loved us; and he could say his ABC's. Ethan was taken from us in December, 2004—a drunk driver, a repeating offender killed our 2½ year old Ethan.

As long as I can remember I've been aware of how our DUI laws allow repeating offenders to endanger our lives. I have listened to police officers, prosecutors, and even members of this very body speak of the need for strict, no-tolerance, mandatory DUI laws. I, as the forementioned individuals, referred to our lenient DUI laws as "laughable," as a "Joke." However, that was before I bent over a small casket and kissed the cold forehead of my grandson. Now I refer to these laws as repugnant and

irresponsible. These laws do not adequately punish, nor do they protect the innocent. The repeating offender that killed Ethan was driving on a suspended license, and had just completed probation. Instead of being in jail, he was allowed to roam free and kill, just as so many more are allowed to do today. Within most dysfunctional families there is an enabler. By making excuses, giving money, compromising, rationalizing, or by simply ignoring the problem, this enabler enables the abuser to continue his behavior. By not incarcerating DUI offenders, this state has become an enabler. Through relatively non-punitive DUI laws and judges with too much wrist-slapping latitude, the offender gets from the state exactly what he needs to continue his behavior—**one more chance**. Normally, it takes the offender killing someone before the charges get serious. I know you're aware of the stats. I'm convinced that you do not need for me to tell you of the hundreds of alcohol-related deaths occurring on Mississippi highways each year. You don't need me to tell you that over 35% of those alcohol-related deaths were from repeating offenders.

Because I've known of our irresponsible DUI laws for some time and have never spoken out to our elected officials, I accept part of the blame for my grandson's death. I also blame the repeating offender that chose to drink and then chose to drive. As far as I know, our grandson's killer is only accountable for one DUI death. However, part of the blame for our grandson's death, and part of every other death resulting from repeating DUI offenders in the state of Mississippi, rests with this body.

In Romans 13, the apostle Paul teaches us that the civil government is ordained by God. You "bear not the sword in vain." Paul calls the civil government the "minister of God." Like it or not, your job, as God's minister, is to protect the good and innocent from the evildoers, and to avenge and execute wrath upon the same. When you

choose not to adequately protect us, you have failed us by not carrying out your God-ordained duty. Ethan was failed by his state government that should have protected him. Before we could enter this place today, we had to go through security. If someone attempted to breach security here, would he simply be allowed to try again, and again, and again, until he was successful? To ask is to answer! Your protection has been seen to; it's now time to see to the protection of your electorate.

In the past, when this body chose not to impose mandatory incarceration laws for DUI offenders, when you chose not to make it a felony, I infer that you deemed it better not to do so. I would like for this body to explain to me why it was **better** for my grandson to die than to get that DUI offender off our streets? Why was it better to let my grandson's killer go free than to protect my grandson's life? While you prepare that answer, I suggest you work on another one. If you choose **not** to hear and act upon these pleadings and choose to let DUI offenders continue to roam free, what will you tell the hundreds of families that will lose loved ones on Mississippi highways this year? Individually, I ask, what will you tell your own family, if it is your child or grandchild that dies this year at the hands of a repeating DUI offender? What satisfactory words will you use to explain to your grieving loved ones why it was better for that innocent life to be taken, rather than incarcerate the criminal? What words of comfort will you use to convince the grieving that the sacrifice of that precious life was for the better? We're not talking about a soldier giving his life for his country. We're talking about an innocent life being taken because of the ultimate decision of lawmakers not to get DUI offenders off the streets. In the sixth chapter of the book of Proverbs there are seven things that are an abomination to God; the first three are "a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood."

I have yet to speak to a state senator, state representative, police official, prosecutor, or law-abiding citizen that is opposed to what I advocate today. However, I was told by state senators, state representatives, police officials, and prosecutors that we are, in essence, wasting our time here today. **Why?** We're not asking for political favors. We're not asking for paved highways, tax breaks, or economic stimulus packages for our communities. We're simply asking for protection from repeating criminals—a crime that transcends ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic boundaries, as was recently demonstrated when another state's Supreme Court Judge was caught DUI on police video. I will concede to being politically obtuse. However, I do not consider myself a stupid man. I cannot understand why this body refuses to get the DUI offenders off the streets. Some might say, if we incarcerate the DUI offender, he will lose his job and maybe his family. Would you worry about the job and family of one breaching security here? Or would your first inclination be to protect those that the offender would harm, and not give him a second chance?

Mr. Chairman and committee members, Mississippi can be in the vanguard of protecting its citizens from repeating DUI offenders. This body can be a leader to other states in our union by passing mandatory, no-dismissal incarceration laws for first-time offenders with increasing time with repeating offenses, and holding judges accountable for not enforcing the laws you pass. Let's get these people off our streets! I sincerely hope and pray that none of you will ever know the anguish, the helplessness, and the anger of losing a loved one to a DUI offender.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Dr. Waid Timothy Wilkes, Sr.

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